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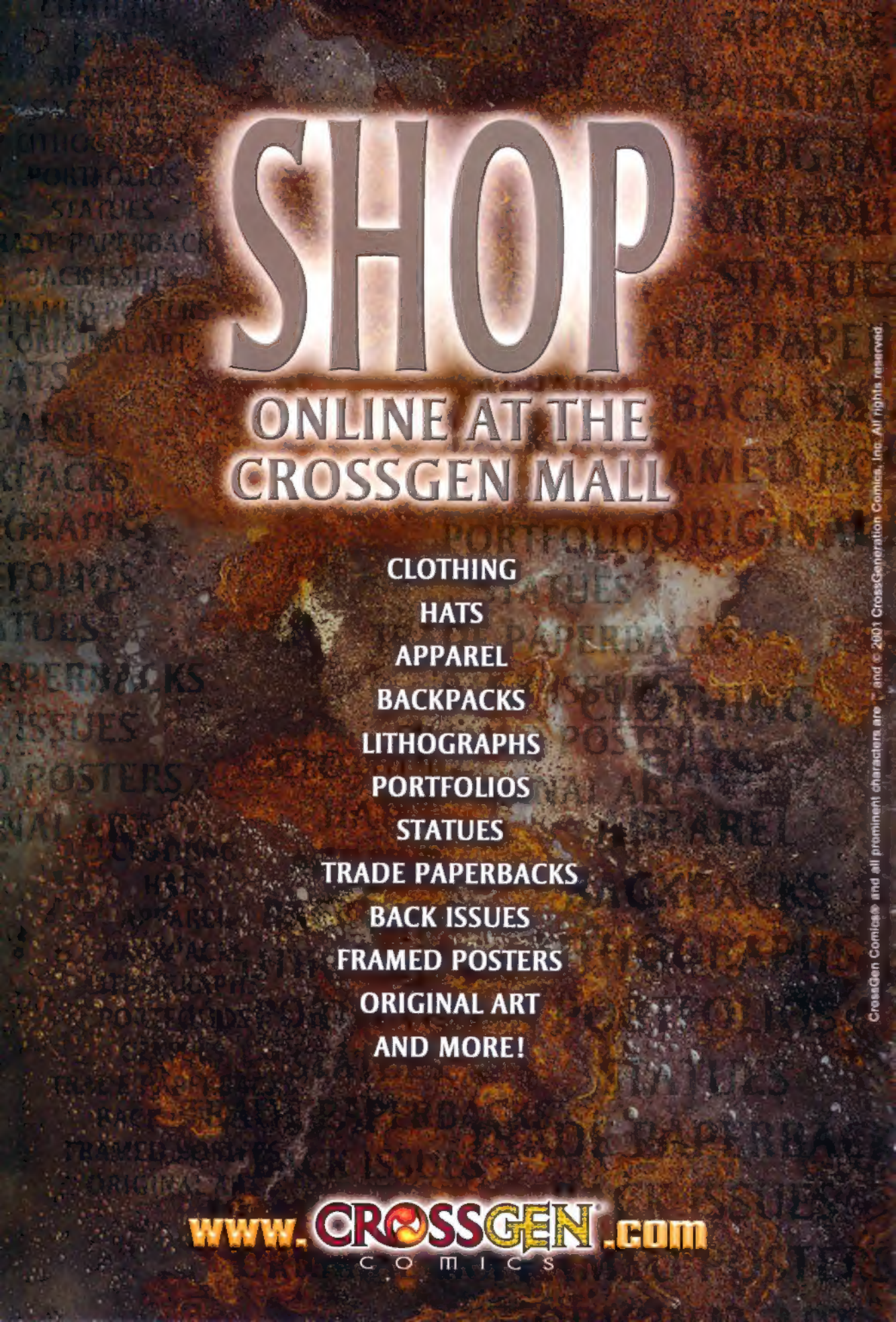
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WIZARD ENTERTAINMENT PROUDLY PRESENTS

THE WIZARD CROSSGEN SPECIAL

WIZARD IS PROUD TO SPOTLIGHT THE INDUSTRY'S NEWEST AND BRIGHTEST STAR: CROSSGEN COMICS

SCOPED OUT

One world or all worlds? You decide!

CROSSGEN ZOMBIES You don't have to be one to like the books.

CrossGen is the greatest experiment in coordinated continuity in the history of comics." I made that realization before CrossGen's head writers Barbara Kesel, Ron Marz and Mark Waid, with WIZARD Staff Writer Chris Lawrence by my side, and watched Waid shake his head.

"No, no, no," he demanded, "I mean, we *are*...but we're *not*."

And in that denial, Waid—the man who invented continuity-busting Hypertime for DC Comics—summed up the beauty of CrossGen's comic books the best. We were all sitting in their Tampa headquarters conference room, surrounded by expensive and rare artwork (every nook and cranny of the entire office features a piece of CEO Mark Alessi's art collection), and I finally understood.

You see, before the company even produced its first page, Alessi and COO Gina Villa had created an enormous bible outlining the history of the universe that would be his comic book world. Spanning tens of thousands of years, it would be the backbone of every book. This is what impressed me, but Mark Waid was adamant in making another impression altogether.

"Every book can be read by *itself*," he stressed. "Yes, there is a plan at work that ties them together, but we'll *never* force anyone to buy more than they have to to enjoy the stories they're following."

So I understood. CrossGen is something for all kinds of comic book fans, for those that want good, rich stories and for those interested in a deep, universe-spanning epic.

As Barbara and Ron nodded in agreement to Mark's clarification, I had to admit to myself, these just might be the people to pull off such an adventure.

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masthead

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WIZARD SPECIAL EDITION

CROSSGEN® COMICS

FEATURES

4 CROSSING GENERATIONS
Who! What! When! Where! Why! It's everything you need to know about CrossGen, their comics and their universe. By Chris Lawrence

6 WELCOME TO HIS WORLD
Coming out of seemingly nowhere, technocrat/comic-lover Mark Alessi has revolutionized comics with CrossGen. Now the tough part—answering your questions. By Chris Lawrence

12 A WELL-LAID PLAN
Each CrossGen comic has more hints and allusions than a season of *X-Files*. If you want to figure out the mysteries of the CrossGen Universe, here's what to watch for. By Chris Lawrence

16 INTO THE WORLD
The ultimate guide to every first appearance, Sigil use, clues and secrets in every issue of every CrossGen comic. You're very welcome. By Justin Aclin

42 HERE'S THE PITCH...
It seems like every other comic company has movie deals, TV shows, action figures and what-not—but not CrossGen! Here are our suggestions to fix all that. By Chris Lawrence

46 A WEEK IN THE LIFE
Senior Writer and comic superstar Mark Waid takes us through the dizzying highs and terrifying lows of a week at CrossGen, and his run-in with the devil.

48 GHOST STORIES
Boo! CrossGen staffers share their otherworldly encounters with the ghost of CrossGen. It's eerie! By Chris Lawrence

PROFILES

18 MAKING HISTORY: CHRONICLES
The ancient secrets of your CrossGen favorites...without the footnotes. By Casey Seijas

20 BATTLE AT THE END OF THE WORLD: CRUX
Earth is an amusement park, and the human race is missing. Could things be worse? Definitely! By Casey Seijas

22 BY THE GODS: THE FIRST
Barbara Kesel weaves an epic soap opera of the gods. By Casey Seijas

26 PRIME MERIDIAN: MERIDIAN
It'll take more than a big, bad wolf to stop the butt-kicking Sephie from getting home. By Casey Seijas

28 THE MAGIC TOUCH: MYSTIC
Move over, Doctor Strange! There's a magic-user in town who's a lot more pleasing on the eyes. By Deanna Destito

30 A TIME FOR WAR: SCION
Dungeons and dragons—and computers and mutants and scientists... By Justin Aclin

32 SPACE ODYSSEY: SIGIL
What if the Three Musketeers had a hyperdrive? Sci-fi at its swashbuckling roots. By Deanna Destito

ADVANCE LOOKS

36 NEGATIVE SPACE: NEGATION
Can a ragtag crew make a Great Escape from a race of inter-dimensional alien marauders? Maybe. By Mike Cotton

38 SLEUTH OR DARE: RUSE
CrossGen investigates the world of Victorian-Era mystery fiction. By Mike Cotton

40 ENTER THE SAMURAI: THE PATH
One warrior swears vengeance against the gods. Yeah, like that's a good idea. By Mike Cotton

24 IT'S A GIANT CROSSGEN CONTEST
If you've got the brain, we've got the cash!
WIN! WIN!

ATLANTIS BRAVES The Atlanteans of *Crux* started it all by destroying it all.

by chris lawrence

SPANNING THE GENERATIONS

Everything you need to know about CrossGen Comics.

Okay, so every comic fan knows CrossGen.

Anyone who's paid any attention to the industry in the last year or so has heard the legend of the "zillionaire fanboy" deciding to use Tampa, Florida, as the launching point for his plan to rejuvenate the comic industry.

But what's CrossGen really all about? It's a secret. No, really. Lean back, kick off your shoes and read on...you'll find out just what we mean.

WHAT IS CROSSGEN?

Founded by entrepreneur Mark Alessi, CrossGeneration Comics (CrossGen, for short) debuted on the racks in the summer of 2000 with five titles (*Mystic, Sigil, Scion, Meridian* and *Chronicles*) by some of the most esteemed creative talents in comics. By the time of the Tampa-based company's one-year anniversary, CrossGen had built upon its early success and expanded the line to eight books (with *The First, Crux* and *Sojourn*), with plans to launch three more in October, November and February.

WHO MAKES THESE COMICS?

The company's creative roster reads like a Who's Who of comic creators, including industry legend George Pérez (*Avengers*), Mark Waid (*Kingdom Come*), Brandon Peterson (*X-Men*), Ron Marz (*Green Lantern*), Bart Sears (*X-O Manowar*), Barbara Kesel (*Hawk and Dove*), John Dell (*JLA*), Greg Land (*Nightwing*) and Jimmy Cheung (*X-Force*). In addition to its established pros, CrossGen boasts an artist mentorship program, which helps promising talent mature into comic artists. The program's first "graduate," Steve McNiven, now works as the regular penciler on *Meridian*.

WHAT'S DIFFERENT ABOUT THIS COMPANY?

Where most companies place their characters in a convenient, controlled continuity, CrossGen's crafted an expansive, intricate and interrelated universe. Meanwhile, each title progresses entirely on its own, relying on self-contained stories, so that if you're not trying to grasp the deep, far-reaching plan, you can still enjoy the stories by themselves.

CROSSGEN? WHAT'S THE NAME MEAN?

When Alessi set out to create CrossGen, he began by digging through the history of comics. He noticed common trends and themes (stories with sci-fi, mystical and magical overtones) that proved successful throughout the many decades of comic's history—or "across generations"—and decided to incorporate them into his planned comic renaissance.

WHAT'S THAT STRANGE SYMBOL ON ALL THE BOOKS?

It *isn't* a red and yellow yin-yang. It's called a Sigil (sih-jill), and it's an important part of the CrossGen Universe. In each title, there's an individual who bears the glowing mark, a symbol that grants its recipient incredible powers. An enigmatic entity has been bestowing Sigils upon mortal inhabitants of the CrossGen Universe, selecting the unknowing "Sigil-Bearers" to save the universe by restoring its waning energies through the "cross-generation" of energy: power from conflict.

ARE ALL OF THESE STORIES IN SOME KINDA ALTERNATE DIMENSION?

Nope. They take place on planets located right here in our dimension (Earth is actually the setting for *Crux*), albeit at a time in the far-flung future.

SO IF THEY'RE IN THE FUTURE, THEN THEY'RE ALL SCI-FI?

Nah. CrossGen's books run the gamut of popular entertainment, from the hard-edged, "Star Wars"-style sci-fi action of *Sigil* to the fantasy-inspired, Tolkien-esque *Sojourn* to books like *Mystic, Scion* and *Meridian*, each of which incorporates elements of science and fantasy in its own distinctive way. Heck, the upcoming *Ruse* is even a mystery comic.

SO THEY'RE ALL IN CONTINUITY WITH EACH OTHER?

Yes. All the CrossGen titles take place in a cohesive continuity, and while characters from one series may pop up in another, such appearances are rare. In other words, fans most definitely don't have to buy all of the CrossGen books to understand what's going on.

WAIT A SECOND. AREN'T THERE ONLY OLD RETIRED PEOPLE IN TAMPA?

Uh, you'll have to ask that one directly to CrossGen.

What should you know about staff writer Chris Lawrence? All the information is available on the wall of your local post office.

CROSSGEN
COMICS

by chris lawrence

WELCOME TO HIS WORLD

Mark Alessi's built his universe from scratch. Now, almost two years under way, he answers the toughest questions the fans can throw at him

Mark Alessi's no longer the new kid on the block.

During his first year as the publisher of CrossGeneration Comics, the one-time techno-baron gained a firsthand perspective on the trials, tribulations and benefits of life in comics. He's dished with distributors, conversed with comic shop owners and picked the brains of some of the most powerful people in the biz—all the while asking them the tough questions, finding out their business philosophies and getting their opinions on the state of the industry, past, present and future.

Now, Alessi's decided to return the favor as best he can. At Alessi's request, WIZARD solicited our readers to ask the toughest questions about CrossGen they could muster. Now, sitting down behind the large desk in his corner office, the former new kid leans back in his plush chair and prepares to share a little of what he's learned—by answering the hardest questions posed by the comic book fans.

Q: From what little I've seen of CrossGen, the books seem to be about fantasy and so on, which isn't really my thing. Will we see you move away from that or perhaps do books which are outside the CrossGen Universe?

—Jack Meyers, Los Angeles, CA

A: Actually, Jack, fantasy maps to only a subset of the CrossGen Universe. Let's be frank. Everything that isn't about superheroes isn't necessarily fantasy. And to be even more frank, it's really all heroic fiction, the reading staple of choice all over the world for the last 3,000 years. Currently, CrossGen storylines cross the genres of high fantasy, historical-based fantasy, science fiction, mystery, romance, magic, mysticism, medievalism and will grow from there.

If you went into the average bookstore, whose objective is to always make available product to cross-fit mainstream America's "fiction"-buying habits and interests, you would find that CrossGen maps to about 70 percent of America's perceived fiction-buying habits, while superhero-type fare equates to a much, much lower, even single-digit percentage of mainstream buying habits and interests. So, oddly enough, we are succeeding and growing in a direct market environment which outsiders might label for our type of fare as a hostile marketplace. Our success has been a real testimony to an increasingly open-minded direct-market audience who wants a good product, regardless of the label the "I've never read it but feel capable of commenting on it" naysayers might put on it.

I guess what I hopefully want you to see, Jack, is that we aren't only about fantasy; we cover more true storytelling genres than any other publisher.

Q: I'm a Marvel fan, so I love the traditional tights-and-cape superhero fare. Which CrossGen books would you suggest I read?

—Carlos Brown Kingston, NY

A: Carlos, I too grew up a big Marvel fan, so I think I understand your and many other's attraction to the more standard superhero fare. But before I give you some CrossGen recommendations, I'd like to share with you why I think this superhero distinction between CrossGen and the big two "superhero" publishers is more a PR ploy or, quite frankly, uninformed opinion.

There are two relatively significant distinctions between our stories and characters and the "big two." One is the setting (I don't think I could handle the

ON THE MARK Alessi's built an entire comic universe from the ground up in record time.

"I don't think I could handle the backdrop to another book being downtown Manhattan."

SPACE RACE Like *Sigil*, all CrossGen books are set on exotic distant locales.

backdrop to another book being downtown Manhattan, much as I like real-world downtown New York). Most of our books are specifically designed to be set on another planet, allowing the art teams to create whole new worlds of imagery for you. Comics are a visual storytelling medium, and we wanted to take the reader to another place, if not another time.

The second distinction has to do with the characters themselves, whether they are the heroes or villains of our tales. In most superhero comics, the heroes almost always do the right thing (because it's the right thing to do) and the villains almost always do the evil thing (because it's the evil thing to do), and that may be what has made superheroes so attractive to all of us. The choices are obvious (black and white) and the characters often need no real motivation to make their directional choice. (Although, personally, I always thought that the best characters in comics were those who were conflicted—Dr. Doom, Magneto, Dr. Octopus, Punisher, Ra's al Ghul). However, in most fiction, that's not the case, and most certainly not the case in the CrossGen Universe.

Since you asked, and given the fact that the "superhero distinction" from CrossGen may be more smoke and mirrors than truth, I would recommend *Scion* (which additionally confronts the issues of racial equality and genetic cloning), and *Crux* (set on Earth and written by longtime successful superhero scribe Mark Waid) as a decent starter kit.

Q: I haven't bought a CrossGen comic, because I've seen all these marks on the key characters. I expect some mass crossover involving all these guys to suck the money out of my wallet by having me buy comics I don't want in order to follow the potential character I *do* like...so, is there going to be a mass crossover?

–Jim Marshall
Shalimar, FL

A: Jim, part of the reason we started this company was to minimize as much as possible the kind of short-term, publisher-beneficial marketing gimmicks designed to beef up this quarter's balance sheet at the fan's wallet's expense! Don't get me wrong, we want your money—we just think we should earn it straight up. Just like you would want to be judged on your actions, we would like the same courtesy.

When we first started, we could understand many of the fans' concerns, since the fans have been, for the most part, the victims of most existing publishers' attempts to squeeze the last dime from a diminishing client base. However, look at our track record. We keep our promises. We promised to publish on time and to date have never missed a ship date! We promised no crossovers and to date (with none planned for the future), no crossovers, meaning each story can be followed completely from any one of the various titles! We promised no variant covers and (despite the fact that the phony sales numbers that frequently include "variant" sales have hurt our positioning in Diamond's Top 100) have never used a variant cover, even though the additional revenues would have been welcomed at times. (I'd rather you buy a new book from someone other than CrossGen than spend double, triple or even much more for the same story!) Again, we don't mind being judged, we just prefer it when people use the truth as the basis for judgment.

Q: You pride yourselves on never missing a shipping date, and for over a year you've been flawless. What will happen when you eventually slip up?

–Michael Montenegro
New Jersey

A: We will apologize! We entered this market with the promise not to miss a ship date, and thus far we have kept this commitment. We also realize that human beings make our product, and because of that, inevitably something will go wrong (extended illness, family crisis, etc.) and we will miss a date. However, you can be assured that missed shipments, even by one week, will never be taken lightly and that we will work diligently to ensure that those occurrences remain the exception and not the rule.

Q: Why should we believe that

CrossGen isn't just another here-today, gone-tomorrow commodity, an example of a fan boy with some money to burn trying to live out a fantasy at the industry's expense?

–David Aberly
Oakland, CA

A: David, with all due respect, in what way have we done anything at the industry's expense? We have produced a high-quality product, always on time, in a market niche that clearly could use a jump-start. We have successfully combined a talent implementation program that includes selected rookies in our associate program, with established veterans who "choose" to be here (there are no, I repeat, no set exclusivity timeframes in any CrossGen employment agreements)! We have worked diligently to provide the highest levels of support to our beleaguered retail community and have been rewarded with retailer-voted awards for which we were applicable! We have given our employees (all of them) a stake in their own future by implementing the only profit and equity-sharing program existing in this industry today! Look at our track record. We have been in business over two years and show not only no sign of exiting, but are the only entity in the comic book publishing community that is growing! Again, if you are in the entertainment business, you are setting yourself up to be judged, and that's okay. Just don't let them make you a lemming. Judge us on the facts.

Q: How are your stories any different, deeper or more compelling than what we've seen before?

–Mike Gilder
Fairfield, CT

A: Different, deep and compelling have to be decided by the individual reader, but I can tell you that we approach storytelling differently from what we believe to be the case at most, if not all, current major comic publishers.

One, we set out from the beginning to have a coherent universe, so continuity isn't what happened along the way as a by-product of independent storytelling. When we did our original analysis of the market, we were surprised that so many of the people we spoke with were increasingly unhappy with the 22-page story format. Maybe it's the price/performance feeling of $2.50-$3.00-plus per comic, but folks told us over and over again that the stories were too short for the money spent. Aptly named internally at CrossGen as "Short Story Syndrome," we set out to try and ensure that our fans wouldn't have that same feeling.

There were only two immediate directions we could take: one, to make our stories longer—but delivering even 22 pages a month on time, every month, seems beyond most graphic storytelling publishing entities (without utilizing crossovers, which we felt was largely a marketing ploy to buttress up weak-selling books or bilk your customer base out of additional dollars to meet this quarter's revenue projections), or two, re-invent the genre.

We chose number two. We decided to develop a universe where each storyline or title largely stood independently yet was a part of a larger-picture, ongoing storyline. This larger picture or overriding back-story eliminated (or at least minimized) "Short Story Syndrome" and became a real positive for fans who wanted to read the entire line, while others could read just one or two books independently and still be entirely satisfied. So while some folks just read one or two of our titles, many read all of them because they are now getting a 150-page-plus (and growing monthly) story, which provides the added value many felt they were missing. Plus, wait and see the price performance value options we will be releasing in the not-too-distant future!

GALLERY OF ARTISTS Famed fantasy artist Esteban Maroto joins the CrossGen crew as of *Chronicles* #7.

Q: How do you think the challenge of maintaining quality and bringing in the same level of talent will be met as CrossGen's number of titles continues to increase?

–Shane Hasty
Pittsboro, NC

A: Shane, from certain aspects the challenge becomes easier, and from other perspectives the challenge becomes more difficult. For example, quality becomes easier to maintain the more we fine-tune our in-house system. While others have built studio-like facilities, I don't believe (outside of Disney animation) any others have approached the size, sophistication or technical and operational complexity that we have implemented here.

Given the stringent work ethic and timely delivery responsibilities our people must have and maintain, we knew we would have to, at least in part, develop our own next generation of talent to supplement externally hired folks. Now that's one area where things have gotten easier. Recruiting initially was mostly my responsibility, but now when we have the need to add "ready to go" staff, our own folks believe enough in the product and the system to pick up the phones, and you can tell by the quality of staff we have added over the last year (George Pérez, Laura DePuy, Greg Land and Mark Waid, to just name a few) that we must be doing something right!

Q: Is it true you tried to steal talent, writers and artists from other companies? Do you believe that's ethical?

–Teddy Pasariello
Northvale, NJ

A: Teddy, we don't steal anything; we have successfully recruited writers, artists, etc. (just like every other publisher in this business has done) by presenting them with opportunities they feel are better for themselves and their families. We offer al

"We think we have the best talent across the board of any company in this industry."

Unlike most companies, CrossGen doesn't pay artists by the page. Creators like Bart Sears enjoy a regular paycheck.

employees a paycheck twice a month (which many feel is superior to submitting vouchers for work completed and then waiting for the next applicable payroll cycle), medical and dental insurance, profit sharing from all affiliated revenue sources (not just comic sales but also movie, TV, video game revenue, etc. when it occurs), plus for the first time ever, all employees have a legitimate equity stake in the company.

For most of them, this is the first time they have believed they have a chance to prepare a positive and financially secure future for themselves and their families.

Are you aware that CrossGen has always been willing to adjust starting dates or allow non-CrossGen work to be completed even after an individual has started at CrossGen to ensure that reasonable existing assignments that might affect you fans are completed (ex. Ron Marz on *Green Lantern* and Mark Waid on *JLA*)?

Are you aware that, unlike most other similar organizations, we do not hold employees to any pre-set contract time-frame? If they are unhappy, they can leave with the "courtesy" standard of two weeks notice like any other job. No one, two, three-year or more exclusives here. You stay at CrossGen only if you want to!

And despite rumors to the contrary, not all employees have received big money to come to CrossGen. Almost 30 percent have actually taken pay cuts to join our team, and most increases have been moderate! With all due respect, I don't believe we could act any more ethically.

Q: What separates your company from all the other upstarts that arrive on the scene, explode and then burn out soon after?

Norm Robertson
San Francisco, CA

A. Norm, clearly what will separate us from those other upstarts (we have been called worse, and by the way, thanks for the "explode" comment) will be *time*! If we are around (and we will be) several years from now to revisit this subject, the separation will be apparent. However, there appear to be several legitimate differences between those prior upstarts (that readily come to mind) and us.

One, we have modeled this company, from a functional and delivery perspective, somewhat like a software development company. We did that because the modular process of developing software that's delivered and functions stand-alone on a pre-scheduled basis, while being designed to be incorporated into a greater whole, maps almost perfectly to the creation of graphic serials. Our individual creative teams concentrate on delivering their monthly title with the support and leadership of our creative management team, which is responsible for overall consistency.

Secondly, we entered the market knowing it would take time to convince a badly abused and frequently disappointed readership that would take a show-me stance and approach. If you know you are going to have to pay for the sins of those who preceded you, then you plan financially for the long haul.

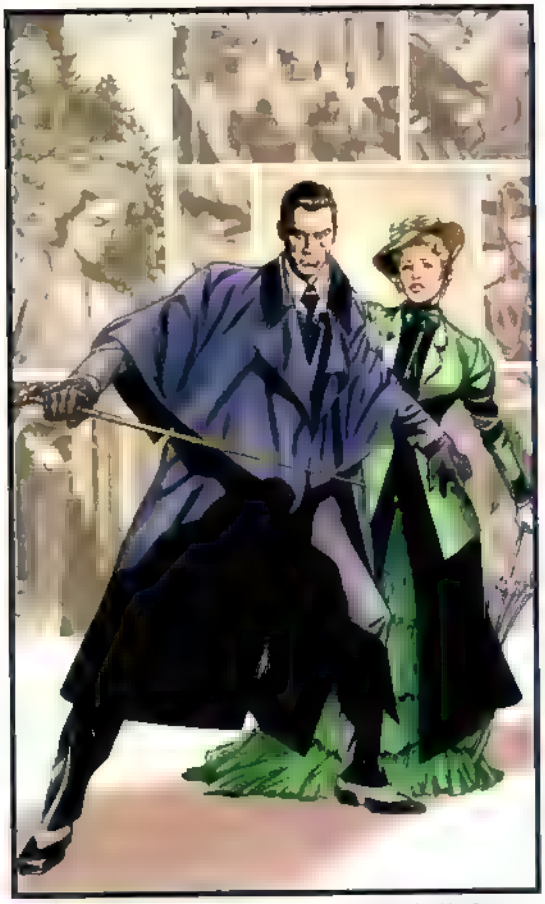
The fact that so many of our current competitors are now emulating some, if not many, of our current practices and techniques is very flattering and confirms that we are on the right track. Rarely do people consciously copy what they perceive to be failure. Norm, we'll talk in a couple of years.

Q: Don't you worry that the recent overdrive that you have gone into with the announcement and release of so many new books might start to put existing readers off (comics aren't cheap these days) or might scare new readers away (they may feel that there is just too much to get and back off)?

—John Gamson
West Yorkshire, England

A. John, certainly your concern is valid, and we thought long and hard about the timing of the release of the next three books (*Ruse*, *Negation* and *The Path*). There are probably three key points that influenced us to move forward with this particular timing.

One, the availability of the kind of high-quality talent that we believed fits us both



CrossGen is ready to launch new titles like *Ruse*, set in new genres (see page 38).

style-wise and attitudinally. Two, the CrossGen Universe has been designed to not only give you a solid individual story per title on a monthly basis, but it's also been designed to provide an expanding and overriding back-story across all the titles for those fans who read all the books and long for more of an epic-type approach. The first 10 titles of our line deliver the foundation baseline to that overall saga. With this philosophy, it was necessary to get that baseline established as quickly as possible and then build more slowly from there. Third, from day one CrossGen has been designed for the long term, which required that we distribute from a financial perspective the infrastructure costs to successfully deliver our books against the minimum number of titles necessary to support our long-term fiscal health. After we completed the initial analysis and then readjusted based upon the actual financial numbers, 10 monthly titles were the minimum necessary. Quite frankly, given that the really big guys produce significantly more books monthly (often upwards of 60-70) and have extensive supplemental revenues (which are just starting to appear for us), and have maintained a similar pricing structure, we think we have done a remarkable job of balancing incremental growth with long-term planning across both the storytelling and financial sides of the house.

Q: You have George Perez, Mark Waid and Ron Marz and then a lot of guys I never heard of. Why should I get excited about your talent when other companies are getting all A-list guys?

–Scott Wilkins
Rio Rancho, NM

A: Scott, hopefully you will take this answer in the spirit that it is intended. To start with, we think we have the best talent across the board of any, I repeat, any company in this industry. I wouldn't apologize for, or trade, our guys and gals (just for grins, do you really think that there are many people in this industry who are in the same class, never mind better than, Brandon Peterson, Greg Land, John Dell, Laura DePuy, Rick Magyar or Bart Sears, just to name a few?) for anyone else, anywhere else!

Since they have never missed a ship date, they have the best track record in the industry for delivering quality on time, and if you really think about it, an "A"-level name doesn't always equate to "A"-level talent or delivery. One of the problems this business has had, and continues to have, is a large number of players who spend more time reading old press clippings rather than generating new ones. Our folks respect the fact that we work for you, and that this is a *job*.

Retailers whose livelihoods depend on a monthly product (after all, their bills come monthly) count on us. Our fans, whose numbers are growing monthly, count on us. We have way too much respect for you and your peers to take you for granted! Don't buy the name, buy the product, and then make them, and us, re-earn it every month!

For more questions with Mark Alessi, visit wizardworld.com on the Internet

CROSSING OVER

A TRIP TO DISTANT WORLDS AND INSIDE THE COMICS YOU OWN—WELCOME TO CROSSGEN.COM

HUNTING SEASON *The First*'s Iwaiin the Hunter ain't lookin' wabbits, he's on the hunt for chaos! Chaos, we tell you!

by chris lawrence

A WELL-LAID PLAN

Get the lowdown on the clues hidden within the CrossGen Universe! Inside secrets and the tidbits you'll need to know....

The truth is out there. CrossGen's books brim with hints, allusions and insinuations, clues to Mark Alessi's overall plan for the CrossGen Universe that the uninitiated reader may miss.

Need proof? Check out the company's message boards, and you're sure to witness some of CrossGen's most ardent fans playing amateur detective. They fastidiously scour each new CG issue, carefully searching for the hidden goodies that the creators deftly conceal within their comic pages. Such discoveries are then announced in grand style on the Website, triggering theories more diverse, outlandish and bizarre than anything that's shown up on *The X-Files*.

If you wanna join in on the fun and create your own theories about the intricacies of the CrossGen Universe, here's what you'll need to know....

THE SIGIL

CrossGen's corporate symbol is a variation on a Japanese heraldic sign, an image drawn from a Samurai code of arms. The original symbol, "The Two Seeds of the Universe," represents potential energy, forces in total opposition that are coming together but not touching. "We've taken it one step further," Head Writer Barbara Kesel says, "and made it a symbol for eternal conflict."

Plot-wise, the red-and-yellow Sigil mysteriously shows up on certain characters in CrossGen's books (the "Sigil-Bearers"), linking them to a source of universal power that grants them incredible abilities.

As for that power itself, Kesel says it's not the Sigil that affects the form of the energy and the way it's used—it's the person who possesses it.

"Back in *CrossGenesis*, we said [of the Sigil-Bearers]: 'Let their actions dictate the flare of the Sigil,'" the writer explains. "Essentially, what you are determines what you can do."

As such, Ethan—prince of a nation at war—manifests his power in the shape of a sword; Sephie—minister of the floating cities of Meridian—uses her Sigil to fly, and Samandahl Rey focuses the desire to change his world into the ability to transmute non-biological material.

There is a second form of Sigil in the CrossGen Universe—the orange "spiked" version that appears on the characters in *Crux*—but it differs greatly from the red-and-yellow Sigil. So what does the orange Sigil do? It remains a mystery...at least for now.

COLOR SCHEMES

Just about everything that pops up in the pages of a CrossGen book possesses some sort of significance to the company's grand plan. In fact, one of the most vital elements of the overall storytelling plan is color—beginning with the Sigil.

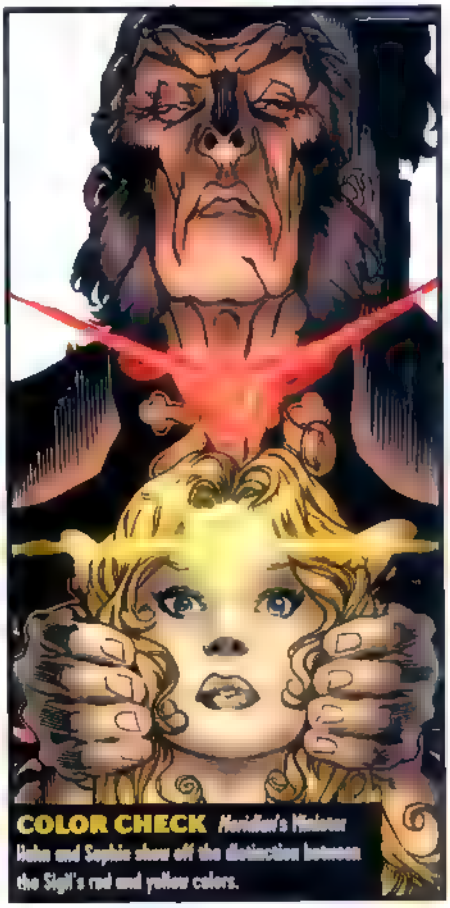
The sides of CrossGen's red and yellow symbol represent the two modes of being as dished by the race known as the First. Broken down into House Dexter and House Sinister, each contingent of the First lays claim to one-half of the Sigil.

Those who've pledged allegiance to the yellow half (House Dexter) epitomize the selfless nature of being, those who dwell under the red sign its selfish nature.

"It's not a factor of good or evil," Kesel affirms. "We've got the gold light of purity and the red light of emotion, which tend to be at the source of the selfless or selfish."

The color each Sigil flares is reflective of the motivation of its Bearer's actions. When Sigil-Bearers act selflessly, the Sigil's energies appear yellow, when they behave selfishly, it flares red.

"When they act neutrally," Kesel adds, "it's a little of each."



COLOR CHECK *Meridian's Matthew Hahn and Sophie show off the distinction between the Sigil's red and yellow colors.*

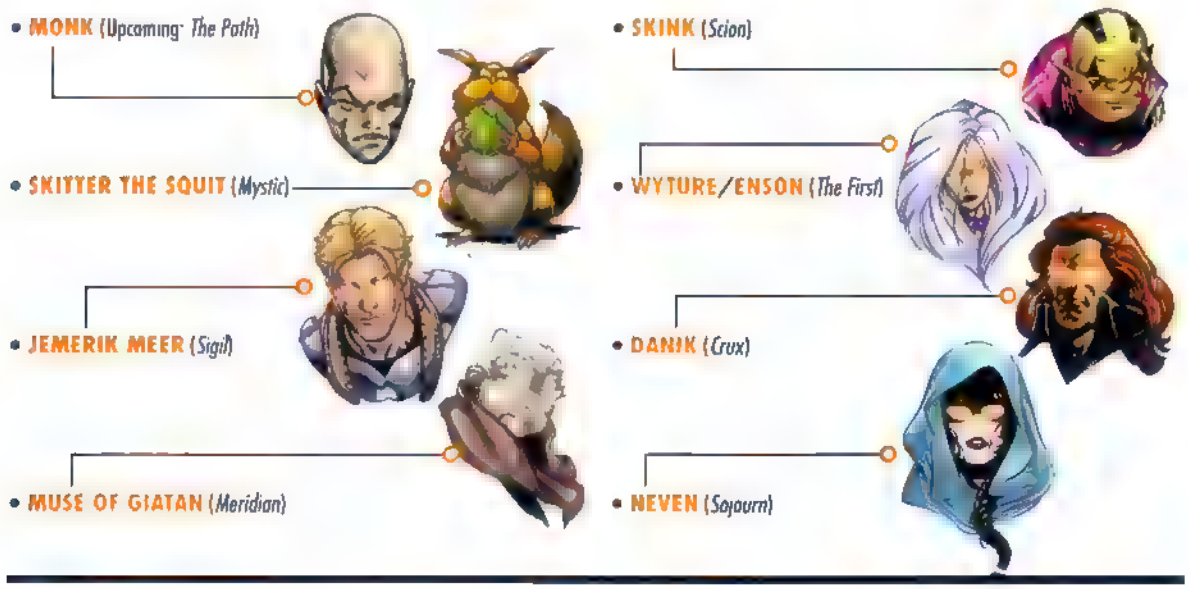
EYE GAMES

Orange eyes have been popping up in CrossGen's books since day one. Page one, actually. Each one of the company's four debut titles opened with a two-page spread depicting two orange-eyed beings—referred to by the message board crowd as "Creator" and "Sidekick"—discussing what is, essentially, the motivation for the CrossGen Universe.

The phenomenon extends far beyond that dynamic duo, however. Each of the Sigil-Bearers was given their powers by one orange-eyed character and is watched over by another.

The power brokers came in the form of: an aged wizard in *Mystic*, an old Saurian in *Sigil*, a bird in *Meridian*, a hooded monster in *Scion*, a cowl-covered individual in *Sojourn* and a young Geisha in *The Path*.

The Mentors, on the other hand, play much larger roles in the lives of the Sigil Bearers. The Mentors seen up to this point include:


• MONK (Upcoming: The Path)
• SKITTER THE SQUIT (Mystic)
• JEMERIK MEER (Sigil)
• MUSE OF GIATAN (Meridian)
• SKINK (Scion)
• WYTURE/ENSON (The First)
• DANIK (Crux)
• NEVEN (Sojourn)

LOOK CLOSER

Sure, CrossGen's plan—and the web of secrets it involves—necessitates its creators to be precise in every aspect of their work, but that doesn't mean they can't have a little fun, too.

Here are some things that made their way into CrossGen books that even the most discerning of readers might not have noticed:

•*Playboy* magazine used to hide one of its trademark bunnies on its cover every month. Paying homage to that tradition, the *Sigil* art team secreted the *Playboy* logo in a panel in issue #11.

•CrossGen staffers Courtland Whited and Mike Beattie have appeared in the pages of *Scion*, in issue #8.

•The name of Cotson, *Meridian*'s bald-headed, jovial character, was derived from the eponym of *Sigil* penciler Scot Eaton.

•Inker Andy Smith penciled one of his own creations into issue 3 of *The First*. Appropriately enough, the character's name is First Man.

•Artist Brandon Peterson included *G Fan* magazine—a favorite publication of *Scion* inker and Godzilla maniac Don Hillsman—in issue #4 of *Mystic*. Jimmy Cheung was on a magazine cover on the same page.

•*Crux* wasn't always *Crux*. The book's original proposed title was *11th Hour*.

•The names of the two lead characters in *Sigil* are derived directly from the two science fiction publishing houses. The last two syllables of "Samandahl Rey" come from Del Rey, a giant in the sci-fi industry, and "Roiya Sintor" represents writer Barbara Kesel's nod to Tor Books.

•*Sojourn* artist Greg Land is renowned for his oft-unique use of reference materials. On a book like *Sojourn*, which involves fantasy creatures like goblins and trolls, Land had to improvise—he took newspaper photos from the NCAA basketball tournament and, with a few modifications, turned collegians into creatures of the darkness.

• The nightclub, Jazzrats, that first appears in *Mystic #5* is named after the user name of one of CrossGen's biggest fans on the company message boards.

•A street sign on the last page of *Crux* #1 (seen left) pays tribute to Mark Waid's creator-owned DC title, *Empire*.

THE PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

What's in a name? Sometimes, it's things you may not want to think about.

"I usually come up with a gimmick for naming in each story or book," Kesel says. "All the Saurian names [in *Sigil*] came from the sounds you make when you're clearing your throat, spelled out."

The writer laughs: "I think my method of naming scares Mark Waid."

For those of you who—like Waid—may not be able to easily gargle names like Tchlusarud and Khyalhtua, Wizard's provided a pronunciation guide for the CrossGen Universe:

ALTWAAL *(al-twall)* King of the First, he was the best and wisest of his race. As one of his former subjects remembers, "He was all things good, and good at ..all things."

CAPELICIA *(kah-pree-sha)* The Atlantean's team leader, a shape-shifter and empath, one who—wisely—uses her mood-reflecting powers sparingly

EIDOLON RIFT *(eye-dough-lon rift)* The barrier that separates House Dexter from House Sinister on Elysia

ILLON *(ill-on)* Minister of Cadador and uncle to Sephie, the devious Illahn can be caught doing evil deeds in the pages of *Meridian*.

KHYALHTUA *(kyal-to-a)* The Saurian goddess grants the power of the Secundae to the Weapons master

KHYRADON *(keer-a-don)* The name taken by the Saurian Weapons master after he receives his godlike powers.

RHO RHUSTANE *(row roos-tain)* This member of House Sinister pops in on Illahn, granting the power of the Secundae to the minister's second-in-command and taking the duo to Elysia

SCION *(sigh-on)* Defined as a descendant or heir. In the case of the CrossGen title bearing that name, the word refers to Prince Ethan, heir to the Heron Dynasty

SHAWN *(shawn)* This ambitious member of the First has a talent for discovery and unearthing the hidden, whether it involves relics, doorways or information

SIGIL *(sih-jill)* The word that defines both a CrossGen book and the company's mysterious symbol rhymes with vigil, with a soft "g" as in "edge."

TCHLUSARUD *(tloo-za-rood)* Sigil's Samandahl Rey abbreviated the name of the young son of a Saurian royal family—who was shamed before his family following a defeat at Sam's hands—as "Loser"

Staff Writer Chris Lawrence (stoo-puhd hed) has big plans for the universe, but they mostly revolve around Wet-Naps

PLANNING FOR SUCCESS

CROSSGEN'S ASSOCIATE PROGRAM GUARANTEES HOME-GROWN TALENT

***MERIDIAN* PENCILER STEVE McNIVEN**

by justin aclin

INTO THE WORLD

This guide will lay out for you the development of characters and their use of Sigils, mysterious goings-on and behind-the-scenes schemes. To follow our hints, use this key below.

CROSSGENESIS

1 **1:** Creator, Sidekick, the worlds of Scion, Sigil, Meridian and Mystic. **1** (Cameo)**:** Giselle, Genevieve, Skitter, Thierry, Alphonse, Sam, JeMerik, Zannati, Rorya, Ethan, Skink, Bron, Ashleigh, Sephie, Turos, Jon, Jad

CLUE: There are two orange-eyed creatures who make their first appearance here, Creator and Sidekick. One seems to be making suggestions and the other seems to be the one who actually takes the action. Note that in every title someone with orange eyes bestows the Sigi

CROSSGEN CHRONICLES

1 **1:** First full appearances of Giselle, Genevieve, Skitter, Sam, JeMerik, Rorya, Zannati, Ethan, Skink, Bron, Sephie, Ilahn, Muse, Pyrem, Trenn, Yalo, Gannish, Onum, Ingra. **1:** Sephie uses Sigil's destructive powers and power of renewal **Y R ?**

2 **1:** Edvin, Alexi

3 **1:** Idena, City of Anheim, Minister Geres, Minister Droche, Minister Eudorice, Clairessa **?**

CRUX

1 **1:** (and gain orange Sigils). Capricia, Gammid, Galvan, Zephyre, Verityn, Tug. **1:** The Negation. Damik **?**

CLUE: Up to this point, we've never seen characters bestowed with the orange Sigil that the Allonteans receive in this issue. It means something different than the other Sigils ...but what?

2 **1:** Geromi

CLUE: Hey ... how many continents does Geromi say there are?

3 **CLUE:** Negation creatures form weapons.

THE FIRST

1 **1:** Todosi, Kerpsan, Todosi's Brother, Wyture, characters and world of upcoming series *The Path*. **1:** Todosi and Todosi's Brother receive Sigils. **D:** Todosi, Kerspan. **R**

2 **R ?**

CLUE: Enson splits himself this issue, leaving behind a monk on the world of the Nayado.

3 **1:** Altwoo, Raamia. **D** (and Resurrection)**:** Raamia

4 **CLUE:** Trenen gains reputation as the Hunter in quest for Tulity.

5 **O:** Houses Dexter and Sinister

6 **D:** Vechem

7 **?**

CLUE: When Enson is talking to Gannish, he shows him 4 reflections. Gannish as he used to look, Gannish as he appears now, the Sigil, and something that looks suspiciously like the orange Sigil from Crux.

8 **1:** Braeg **?**

CLUE: Enson's conversation with Pyrem hints at Enson's motivations.

9 **1:** Ilahn uses Sigil to drain the power of the First **R**

MERIDIAN

1 **1:** Turos, Jad, Feabie, Zouka, Jon, Mira. **1:** Sephie, Turos, Ilahn receive Sigils. **D:** Turos **Y R ?**

2 **1:** Cadador, Ilahn meets Muse **Y R ?**

3 **Y R ?**
CLUE: Sephie sits in on a meeting with a representative from Torbel that sets up a story that will culminate in issue #19

4 **1:** Reesha **1:** Enson, Persha, Seahn, Mama (in a backup story that appeared also in *Mystic*, *Scion* and *Sigil* #4) **R ?**

5 **1:** Minister Maraya **1:** Sephie uses Sigil to survive a fall, to bring blighted zone back to life. **1:** Ilahn uses Sigil to harm a human **Y R**

6 **Y ?**

7 **1:** Sephie uses Sigil to float **1:** Ilahn uses Sigil to be impervious to pain **Y R ?**
CLUE: On the last page of this issue, Sephie's Sigil glows red for the first time.

8 **Y ?**
CLUE: Reesha meets Muse for the first time

9 **1:** Sephie uses Sigil to fly, move objects **Y R**

10 **1:** Cotson, Hondell, Daneyn, Rho Rhustane **Y ?**

11 **1:** Reesha gains powers **Y ?**

12 **1:** Deren Beq **1:** Sephie uses the Sigil to heal someone else **Y ?**

13 **1:** Dren, Aldur, Merime, Cereg **Y R ?**

MYSTIC

1 **1:**Magus, Mondru, Atyaoh, Zai Yoshua, Yinma **1:** Giselle receives Sigil **Y ?**

2 **1:** Thierry Chevalier, Alphonse **R**

3 **1:** Darrow **Y R**
CLUE: Darrow's ring is the red half of the Sigil, and he stands under a sign that says "Sinister Notions."

4 **1:** (Visually) Alain, Jinai, Herotus, Aunmai, Adaya, Magus, Mindoka **Y ?**
CLUE: Not only Darrow distrusted by Skitter, but his limo's license plate reads "SINSR."

5 **1:** Giselle changes outfits **1:** Jazzrat's nightclub **Y ?**

6 **Y R ?**
CLUE: Further proof Skitter is more than he appears: He seems to defeat Mondru, off-panel.

7 **Y**
CLUE: Darrow meets with Ingra of the First

8 **1:** Animora (cameo)

9 **1:** Animora freed from captivity **Y R ?**

10 **Y ?**
CLUE: Gen and Giselle are frequently seen holding roses, which will play a part in a future story

11 **CLUE:** On pages 2-3, there are four symbols in the corners. Two are Guild signs that may signify future allies. One is the Sigil, and one appears to be that mysterious orange Sigil again.

12 **Y**

13 **Y ?**

14 **1:** Giselle uses her Sigil to drain power from the First **Y R ?**
CLUE: As Giselle battles Animora, something more is happening there. We're just not saying what.

SCION

1 **1:** Artor, Kai, Dane, Mariella, Ylena **1:** Ethan receives Sigil **1:** Sigil mysteriously changes Ethan's blade **Y ?**
CLUE: It's telling of the direction of the series that the character to give Ethan his Sigil is of the Lesser Races

2 **1:** Ashleigh, Viktor **1:** Ethan uses his Sigil to heal himself **Y ?**
CLUE: Skink's eyes glow orange, he says "sleep," and Ethan falls asleep.

3 **1:** Exeter **Y**

4 **1:** Exeter (full) **Y ?**
CLUE: Skink is able to topple a building onto Exeter.

5 **Y ?**
CLUE: Ethan sees mysterious underwater city

6 **D:** Artor **Y**

7 **1:** Bernd Rechts **Y**
CLUE: The pin on Bernd's sash is only the yellow half of Ethan's Sigil.

8 **1:** Mai Shen
CLUE: Mai Shen's earrings are only the red half of Ethan's Sigil.

9 **1:** Ethan produces a sword using the Sigil **Y**
CLUE: When Ethan spares Exeter, Skink seems pleased.

10 **Y ?**
CLUE: Is Skink making Artor's ghost talk? Could be

11 **1:** Bron gains powers

12 **D:** Viktor **Y**

13 **Y**
CLUE: Bron says he thinks Ethan is surprised by his new powers, but he doesn't realize Skink is surprised, too.

SIGIL

1 **1:** Sutton Ronolo, Trouble **D:** Roiya **1:** Sam receives the Sigil. Sam uses the Sigil's destructive energy **R ?**
CLUE: JeMerik is touching Roiya as she dies. When he says she's connected, he doesn't mean to the Medik.

2 **1:** Tchlusarud **1:** Sam uses the Sigil to morph things **Y R**

3 **Y R**
CLUE: The relationship between JeMerik and Roiya starts developing, which will eventually affect not only this book, but one other as well.

4 **1:** Sam uses Sigil to steal power from Tranin **Y R**

5 **1:** Tcharun, Weaponsmaster **Y R ?**

6 **1:** Sam uses the Sigil to survive without oxygen **Y R ?**

7 **1:** Sam uses the Sigil to meld two ships together **Y R ?**

8 **1:** Tchlusarud's Mother **R ?**

9 **1:** Zanniati's Parents **Y ?**
CLUE: There's a big scene with JeMerik, where we see him in his aspects as Wyture and Enson from the First, the monk that Enson split off into Skink from Scion, Skitter from Mystic, the Muse from Meridian and a character who has yet to show up anywhere, as well as a humanoid form composed of orange energy. This marks the first time one of the "orange-eyed" characters has revealed themselves to someone else

10 **R ?**
CLUE: Saurians admit to gaining knowledge by consuming humans

11 **1:** Weaponsmaster gains powers from Yala, becomes Khyradon **1:** Sam uses the Sigil to heal himself **Y R ?**

12 **Y R**

13 **D:** Tchlusarud's family **Y R**

SOJOURN

PREQUEL 1: Mordath, Ayden **D:** Mordath **1:** Mordath gains a Sigil **?**
CLUE: At the end of the issue, we see The Creator and The Sidekick have a disagreement for the first time. By noticing the color of the energies Ayden wields and paying attention to what he says, you might get a hint about his past

1 **1:** Arwyn, Kreeg, resurrected Mordath

by casey seijas

MAKING HISTORY

[illegible] check the Chronicles.

Happen to be a newbie to the CrossGen Universe? Maybe you want to find out about the history of one of your favorite titles?

Then *CrossGen Chronicles* is definitely the book for you.

As almost any CrossGen fan knows, the world of CrossGen exploded when the mysterious Sigil-Bearers—Giselle, Sam, Ethan, Sephie and Ilahn—were first introduced. However, the world of CrossGen existed long before that, and with the quarterly-published *Chronicles* the stories of that world get their chance to be told.

"*Chronicles* is kind of our uber-historical series that lets us tap into the back history and mythology of our various books," explains Barbara Kesel, co-writer of *Chronicles* #1 and writer of issues #3. "It's sort of a showcase of stand-alone stories where you can just enjoy them but you don't have to get into the whole series."

Issue #1 introduced the original major players of CrossGen, including the first appearance of the First, basically the gods of the CrossGen Universe. Later issues told of each CrossGen title's past history, starting with *Scion*. Issue #3 caught up with the story of Sephie's parents in the world of *Meridian*.

"I think the *Chronicles* are perfect for new readers because they're ground floor reads," says Ron Marz, co-writer of issue #1 and writer of issue's #2 and November's #5. "Each one is an individual story that ties into the regular monthly series."

Another major draw for *Chronicles* has to be fan favorite artist and series penciler George Pérez, who has been producing some of his best work to date in the pages of the book. If you need more proof, be sure to check out the incredible splash pages in *Chronicles* #2 and #3.

"I think that this is by far the best work George has done in years," says Marz. "One of the biggest reasons is that he's got the time to really labor over each issue, thanks to *Chronicles* being a quarterly series. Plus we have the time to really give his artwork the production, inking and coloring it deserves."

In the upcoming *CrossGen Chronicles* #4, Kesel promises fans a glimpse into the back story of Samandahl Rey, the Sigil Bearer of the series *Sigil*.

"The thing they can expect there is to know where the animosity between Sam and Loser began," explains Kesel. "Plus it'll go into the relationship between Sam and Raiya."

After that, Giselle, the star of *Mystic*, receives the *Chronicles* treatment, and fans can look forward to more work by Pérez, as well as three issues each in 2002 by fantasy artists Esteban Maroto (*Atlantis Chronicles*) and Rudy Nebres (*Vampirella* Magazine) when the title goes bi-monthly during Pérez's run on *JLA/Avengers*. "George just picked up a new batch of plots," says Marz. "He's probably already started working on them."

Staff Writer Casey Seijas's history is given out on a need-to-know basis.

Chronicles shows off not only peeks at ancient history (what's Orion of the First doing at left?) but also beautiful artwork by the likes of George Pérez.

by casey seijas

END OF THE WORLD

[redacted]

The human race is missing, Earth's been turned into a giant amusement park and swarms of giant, alien bug creatures plot to take over the planet. It's up to a group of seven Atlanteans to clean up the mess—too bad they can't get along for more than five minutes!

This sets the stage for one of CrossGen's hottest current titles, *Crux*, written by fan-favorite scribe Mark Waid and penciled by Steve Epting. The series opens up 12,000 years in the past on the ill-fated empire of Atlantis, where a group of Atlanteans are sworn to protect and shepherd the newly developed human race throughout their existence. However, six superpowered Atlanteans are awakened 100,000 years in the future to an Earth filled with gigantic bug creatures called the Negation.

"Not only do they have to acclimate themselves to their new environment, but they were responsible for watching over the human race, and now they're missing," explains Waid.

Unfortunately, the human race will be lucky if they're ever heard from again, with this group of out-of-place super-beings in charge. Their leader, the level-headed shape-shifter Capricia, has done her best to lead by example, but whether it's the bickering, energy-harnessing twins Galvan and Gammid or the faster-than-lightning temptress Zephyre, she's certainly got her hands full.

As with many of the other CrossGen books, the setting takes on a character of its own and *Crux* is no exception. After the powerful Terra Cognito Corporation (in a sense) bought out the rights to the planet, they decided to make it an amusement park for intergalactic visitors in order to give them a sense of Earth's entire history. While the series opens at a time when most are only familiar with Earth through history books and mythology, the futuristic world of Terra Cognito Earth can only be described as Walt Disney World on a global, and transdimensional, scale.

"What's beautiful about the world of Terra Cognito is that it takes them all over different landscapes," describes Waid. "They can go from 18th century Beijing to 25th century London within the span of a footstep, because it's an amusement park."

After issue #6, team morale is at an all-time low, to say the very least. The group will then evoke an ancient Atlantean ceremony of storytelling, which will reveal the inner struggles of each character and bring the group closer together and more focused on the mission.

"We come out of that with a far more structured and intensified quest to find out what happened to the humans," says Waid on upcoming issues. "No more fooling around with the Negation. No more wandering the ruins of 14th century China. They have a new resolve."

Casey Seijas resolves to give up tofu

Shape-shifter Capricia turns her back on the Negation, with disasterous results.

CROSS EXAMINATION

BRINGING YOU UP TO SPEED ON CRUX...

[redacted]

by casey seijas

BY THE GODS

[illegible] the most powerful beings of the CrossGen Universe

The Real World: Mt. Olympus? Almost.

Actually, it's *The First*, a series that looks into the conflicts and adventures of a group of superpowered beings, known as the First, who make up the gods of the CrossGen Universe. However, rather than being about the regal, compassionate gods of myth, the series seems to have more drama than a full week's worth of *General Hospital*.

"With *The First*, [Series Penciler] Bart Sears and I kind of take this grand panorama of gods," explains Series Writer Barbara Kesel, "but rather than them be solely the cliché that, 'I'm the God of War, you are the God of Love,' and very simplistic renderings of characters at that level, we give all of the nasty high school cliques and personality quirks and petty behavior that people would have if they became gods and got to hang around as gods for a long time and got kind of bored."

The First follows the events of this nation of gods, who reside in their home world of Elysia with their offspring, the Secundae. They are divided into two separate cities, one side inhabited by the Clan Dexter, the other by the Clan Sinister—each representing one side of the CrossGen Sigil.

Dividing the two cities is the Eidolon rift, a physical manifestation of the two sides' antagonism to each other. "They've been split into two halves, and it's kind of like a 'bad neighbor' situation," says Kesel.

Add to this brooding conflict the mysterious appearance of the Sigil-Bearers, some of which Elysia's inhabitants want to destroy and others want to exploit, since not everyone is content to be ruled by the First.

As a civil war between the gods brews, two younger gods named Seahn and Persha try to find answers about why the once-prosperous world has now turned against itself.

"Persha and Seahn are deliberately naive, because they're both hundreds of thousands of years old," explains Kesel. "Persha is very innocent, but she knows everyone's secrets. Then we have Seahn, who's sort of a single-minded creature of ambition who would like to think he's wild, but is pretty much Mr. James Dean, rebel without a clue."

Between the large-scale conflict, the scheming between the two ruling Houses of Elysia, backstabbing on a personal scale and more secrets than the Nixon administration, Seahn and Persha have their work cut out for them if they want to discover the mysteries of their world, their history or the Sigil Bearers.

Kesel keeps her method for writing soap operas inhabited by gods simple. "Take anything that happens in the world around me and just magnify it to a ridiculous extreme," says Kesel on her strategy of god-writing. "We have this huge, Shakespearean cast and this terrific Olympian grandeur and petty, real little people living in it."

All you have to do to Staff Writer Casey Seijas is mention Luke and Laura, and he'll start weeping uncontrollably.

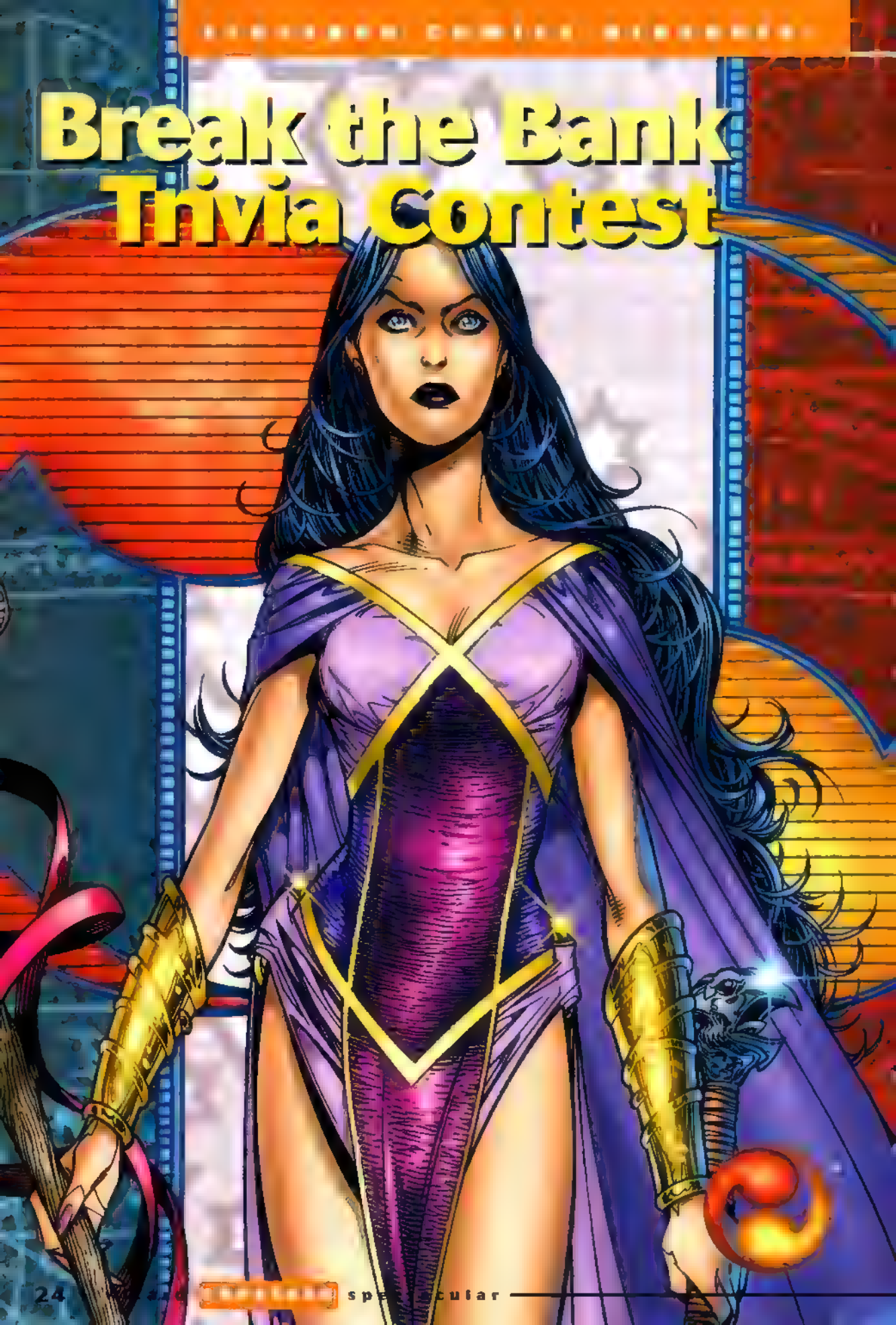
CROSS EXAMINATION

BRINGING YOU UP TO SPEED ON THE FIRST...

[illegible]

New gods Pyrem (left) and Persha (upper right) are having a hard time holding their world together.

Break the Bank Trivia Contest



GRAND PRIZE (1): One extremely lucky reader who answers all questions correctly will win $10,000 (yep, 10,000 big ones). This is one of Wizard's largest grand prizes ever offered!

Just answer the following 20 questions on the entry form below (or the entry form on page 129 of WIZARD #121), stick it in the mail and send it in! To help you on your way to instant money, the answers to the first two questions can be found in this CrossGen Special that you're holding in your hands right now! Get crackin' on these questions and be on your way to instant bucks!

Of course, for 10 grand, it's not gonna be easy. It's gonna take a little work. So start reading to find the answers and the clues that will help you walk away with the loot. You can enter as many times as it takes to get them all correct.

QUESTIONS

1. What is the street address of the detective who is the main character in *Ruse*?
2. How many captives escape from the Negation prison camp in the beginning of *Negation*?
3. Where was the first battle of the current Raven-Heron war fought?
4. Who is Seahn's father?
5. Which one of Mordath's officers is charged with capturing Arwyn?
6. What is "grottescaphobia"?
7. Who declares himself "blind, bowlegged and drunk"?
8. What's the name of the child Capricia comforts in *Crux* #1?
9. Who is Lightbourne?
10. Who are the current members of the House Dexter and House Sinister High Councils?
11. What is the true identity of the detective in *Ruse*?
12. What is the Jataka and what is it used for?
13. What is the former occupation of Obregon Kaine?
14. Thierry's gork is named after whom?
15. In the CrossGen Universe, the mentors are identifiable by what shared physical trait?
16. What is the name of the now-defunct eighth Major Guild?
17. Name three of Samandahl Rey's commanding officers during his army days.
18. How much pain does crossing the Eidolon rift cause members of the First?
19. Where is Altwaal?
20. What mythical creature threatens the children of Meridian?

If you have any questions regarding this contest, please e-mail contest@crossgen.com.

Fill this out, attach your entry and put it in an envelope. Send to: CrossGen/Wizard: Break the Bank Trivia Contest!, c/o PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP PO Box 172178, Tampa, FL 33672-0178.

Deadline is Dec. 19, 2001.

Name _____ Date of birth _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone number (with area code) _____

E-mail address _____

ANSWERS

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____
11. _____
12. _____
13. _____
14. _____
15. _____
16. _____
17. _____
18. _____
19. _____
20. _____

Mystic Laws

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Entertainment, CrossGeneration Comics, Inc., the immediate families and anyone who names their pet "Skitter." Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip, e-mail address and telephone number with area code on the official entry form or a 3-by-5-inch index card. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry separately to: CrossGen/Wizard: Break the Bank Trivia Contest, c/o PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP, P.O. Box 172178, Tampa, FL 33672-0178. No mechanical reproductions of completed forms are accepted, but you can photocopy the entry form before filling it out if you don't want to mess up your magazine. All entries and all rights relating thereto become property of CrossGeneration Comics, Inc., and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. Prizes are awarded in the names of the contest winners and are not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purposes and rules hereof. All entries must be received by Dec. 19, 2001. To make sure everyone knows that this is the real deal and legit, the winner will be required to sign an affidavit stating that they did not obtain the correct answers from employees of CrossGen. If the winner is under 18 years of age, a parent or legal guardian will be required to sign the affidavit.

Wizard Entertainment and CrossGen Comics are not responsible for lost, late, misdirected or mutilated entries. A winner will be selected based on completeness, correctness of entry by PricewaterhouseCoopers. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. If an entrant having been declared as a winner does not accept the prize or the prize or prize notification is undeliverable, another entry will be selected. In the event that a prize is not available or it becomes impossible for the sponsor to award the prize that has been designated, the sponsor retains the right to substitute a prize or product of equal value to the winner. Determination of whether a prize or product is of equal value is in the sole discretion of the sponsor.

For a list of winners available after Dec. 19, 2001, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: Break the Bank Trivia Contest!, c/o Wizard Entertainment, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

by casey seijas

PRIME MERIDIAN

[redacted]

Imagine your only living parent dies and you're forced to move in with an evil uncle while everyone you've ever known assumes you're dead. You manage to escape, but then you're forced into slavery in a strange new world. Finally, you escape slavery, thanks to a strange and powerful ability that only makes everything more and more bizarre from that point on.

Now imagine all of this happens in the span of two weeks—and you're just a sixteen-year-old girl.

Sounds like too much to handle, right? Well, that's exactly what Sephie, the main character of *Meridian*, has been going through since this fairy-tale fantasy series began last year. Written by Barbara Kesel and penciled by Steve McNiven, *Meridian* represents a new twist on a vastly untapped resource: the young female comic book fan.

"When I was a young girl, I wanted to read a comic about girls who made decisions and took action," says Kesel. "If you looked at a comic when I was a kid, and even sometimes now, there's a lot of female protagonists which are often men in chick suits."

However, don't expect the typical, romantic swill that is so often served to female comic fans, because Kesel never enjoyed them in the first place.

"When I worked for a prior company, the idea would come up, 'Let's do a comic for girls, let's do romance comics,' and I would say, 'Excuse me, let's do a comic for girls, let's do Dungeons and Dragons with all of the soap opera elements that brings in,'" explains Kesel.

Meridian follows the adventures of Sephie, a young girl who inherits a Sigil with the power to create and forge renewal from her father, who died shortly after inheriting the symbol of power in the CrossGen Universe. However, Sephie's wicked Uncle Ilahn also inherited a Sigil, which gave him the ability to destroy at will. Realizing the potential for Sephie's newly discovered powers, Ilahn kidnaps Sephie and takes her to the Kafka-esque world of Cadador, where Sephie's adventures and ultimate quest to return to her homeworld of Meridian begin.

Over the past year, Sephie has found herself in quite a few predicaments, from high-speed air-ship pursuits to escaping from a slavery camp. However, this all plays into what Kesel refers to as a story about growing up.

"Sephie realizes that she's gone from a girl who lived in a floating sky-city to suddenly being a grown-up and having to face all sorts of things that were going to come along eventually, but have come along all at once," expounds Kesel. "She has to grow up really fast to think in adult terms about how to counter Ilahn's plans to take over and shut down her world."

An upcoming battle between an army that Sephie has formed and the Cadadorian army will set the groundwork for upcoming issues. However, only time will tell if Sephie will eventually return to Meridian and restore peace once and for all to the world of Demetria.

Staff Writer Casey Seijas can make decisions and kick ass, even if he isn't a girl.

Can Sephie save the world and still have time to grow up properly?

CROSS EXAMINATION

BRINGING YOU UP TO SPEED ON MERIDIAN...

[redacted]

by deanna destito

THE MAGIC TOUCH

[redacted], DC Mystic, Marz's unseen story and the magician in Mystic

She's a whole lot easier on the eyes than Doctor Strange. But that's who *Mystic* Writer Ron Marz compares his heroine to.

"It's really inspired by some of the classic magic comics that have gone before it," explains Marz. "But rather than the main character [like Strange] being some magician in a mundane world, the twist is that the entire world is magical. Everything on the planet runs by magic of various types—and Giselle is charged to be the magical protector of that world."

On the planet Ciress, the magic of the seven Guilds rules. Giselle Villard, a partying socialite, couldn't be bothered by the magical powers around her. Her sister Genevieve, on the other hand, studied her whole life to become Guild Master, a process that entails taking in the spirit of one of the seven Masters who vanquished a beast long ago. At Genevieve's Rite of Ascension, a mysterious old man disrupts the ceremony and places a Sigil in Giselle's palm. The unexpecting heroine is then bombarded with not only her Guild's spirit, but all seven Guild spirits.

The Guild Masters will do anything, even kill Giselle, to get their power back. Giselle thwarts all attempts on her life, and with the help of Genevieve and her trusty talking pet squit, Skitter, she outsmarts the Masters and overtakes the Masters' moon sanctum. Now, as the mystic protector of the planet, Giselle must control her newfound powers and the dissenting spirits within to overcome a threat, Animora, that could wipe out all of Ciress.

The most frightening part is that Animora was released by pissed-off Masters who want to get their power back.

Got all that? Well, it ain't over yet. Giselle's social life also gets a jolt when she becomes taken with the mysterious Darrow, a member of the First who's on assignment to keep her threatening power in check. To complicate things more, an artist named Thierry has a crush on her—but there may be a love triangle brewing between him and the sisters.

In September, Giselle continues her journey to understand the power she wields. Marz hints that she'll be facing a creature that feeds on magic—which means she needs to find a powerless way to bring it down. Issue #17 is significant not only because it'll put Genevieve in the spotlight, but also because Associate Artist Fabrizio Fiorentino shows off his first complete American issue.

"His stuff kicks ass," Marz says.

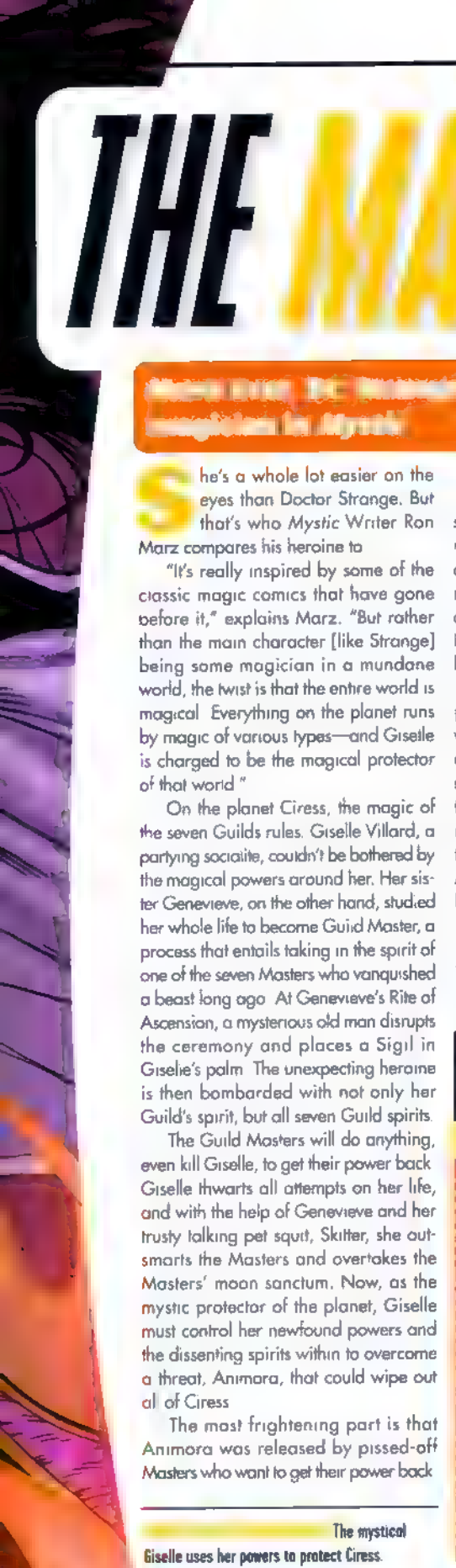
Brandon Peterson, formerly of *X-Men*, is *Mystic*'s regular artist.

Issue #17 will also mark another big milestone—it will be the last for Marz, who is leaving *Mystic* to work on three other titles.

Former DC and Vertigo Editor Tony Bedard will take over *Mystic*'s reigns and believes it is the most accessible title for new CrossGen readers. Bedard wants to explore other elements of Ciress, detailing the planet around Giselle.

"What's being a cop like or what's money like in a world as fantastic as Ciress?" Bedard says. "I want it to feel like a real world." The writer also plans on breaking down the other Guilds and better defining the powers that have been thrust upon Giselle.

Wizard Writer Deanna Destito is powerless against cupcakes.



The mystical Giselle uses her powers to protect Ciress.

CROSS EXAMINATION

BRINGING YOU UP TO SPEED ON MYSTIC...

by justin aclin

A TIME FOR WAR

Scion isn't your typical fantasy comic. Sure, it features both dungeons *and* dragons; however, the dragons are scientifically engineered creatures with on-board computers, and the dungeons are just as likely to imprison anti-slavery activists as they are captured enemies.

"It's the genre-crosser here at CrossGen," says *Scion* writer Ron Marz. "There's a bit of fantasy, a bit of science fiction, a bit of straight medieval adventure." This mix of influences, along with the dynamic art by former *X-Force* penciler Jim Cheung, have made the title one of the most successful of the entire CrossGen line.

Scion tells the story of Ethan, youngest prince of the Heron dynasty. In ritual combat against Bron, prince of the rival Raven clan, Ethan manifests a mysterious Sigil, giving him powers that injure Bron and reignite hostilities between the two kingdoms. During the ensuing war, Bron kills Ethan's oldest brother, and Ethan swears revenge. His quest for vengeance has taken him into the heart of Raven territory, where he has met new characters and discovered new powers granted to him by the mysterious Sigil.

One of the paths that his quest has taken has led him to Ashleigh, a freedom fighter who is also Bron's sister, as Ethan only recently discovered. Ashleigh has been trying to get Ethan to lend his might to the fight for independence of the Lesser Races, genetically engineered-but-intelligent creatures used as servants and slaves. Ethan's sidekick, Skink, is of the Lesser Races, but with his glowing eyes and propensity for making ghosts appear out of thin air, Skink may be more than he seems.

Ethan wants to help the Lesser Races, but still feels responsibility to his kingdom and his family. "That conflict within Ethan is going to come to a head within the next three or four issues," explains Marz. "After that, right up through the end of the second year of the book, we'll start addressing how this war is going to shake itself out, and I think it's not how anybody expects it to go."

As for Ethan, he's had two fights with Bron so far. In the first, Ethan permanently scarred Bron using the power of the Sigil. In the second, Bron was given the edge because of powers given to him by one of the First, and he appeared to have killed Ethan—but not quite. "It's kind of a draw right now. Somewhere down the road, we should do a rematch. In fact," Marz says knowingly, "issue 25 might be a good place."

Whenever that match up does come, Bron will be facing off against a very different person than the one who scarred him way back in issue #1, Marz says. "By the time we get to the end of year two of the book, Ethan will have grown into quite a strong character, and I think we've been bringing that process along ever since we started the book. His destiny is far greater than being the youngest prince."

Justin Aclin considers himself Wizard's genre crosser. Oh wait...is that different from cross-dresser?

Ethan cradles his murdered brother—and plots for his revenge.

CROSS EXAMINATION

BRINGING YOU UP TO SPEED ON SCION...

by deanna destito

SPACE ODYSSEY

[redacted]

Humor, romance and space adventure, complete with battleships and alien races ready for a hostile takeover. It's all in a day's storyline for *Sigil*, CrossGen's sci-fi series by scribe Mark Waid and artist Scot Eaton.

"*Sigil* is, at this point, our only straight sci-fi book, though both *Crux* and the forthcoming *Negation* are also grounded in sci fi," says Waid, "More than that, it's our classic swashbuckling, damsel-in-distress, jaw-dropping-cliffhanger series."

The swashbucklers in question would be Sigil-bearing solider Samandahl Rey, his temporarily disembodied partner Raiya Sintor, runaway sultan's mistress Zanniati and mysterious sultan's guard JeMerik Meer: four misfits on the run, brought together by chance and on the run from equally dangerous enemies.

Kidnappings occur, romances develop and political machinations are put into play as the Sultan Ronolo's men, the Planetary Union, and the Saurians all chase our heroes in search of the mysterious weapon that razed the planet Tanipal. As Sam and Zanni fight to protect Zanniati from the Sultan's wrath, the Saurians are having problems of their own.

Waid says readers can expect more mayhem from Khyradon, the Saurian Weaponsmaster who, after being granted god-like powers, plans a takeover, having already killed most of the ruling Saurians. As in all of the CrossGen books, the question of why certain characters are being granted these powers is a constant one.

"While *Sigil* certainly can be read on its own apart from the other CG books," explains Waid, "like all our titles, if you read other CG series as well, you'll begin to see the threads of a greater tapestry."

There will also be developments as far as the war between worlds goes. Waid hinted that a major turnaround will be taking place. "It won't be pretty," says Waid, "Meanwhile, lurking in the shadows is Sultan Ronolo, a scheming mastermind whose attempts at war profiteering Sam have already fouled once."

Waid, who took over the book with issue #12, plans on continuing with the humorous, sci-fi feel of the book.

"Since I tend towards applied science in my writing, I'd guess the feel will increase," says Waid. "*Sigil* probably has a lot more humor in it than the rest of the line. Over time, readers will let me know whether this is good or bad. Let's hope the former."

Deanna DeShito knows what's bad: too much Comedy Central. They show Major League every five hours.

At left, Army Commander Samandahl Rey faces off against the Saurian fleet. Above right: Loser's a little tired of his nickname.

CROSS EXAMINATION

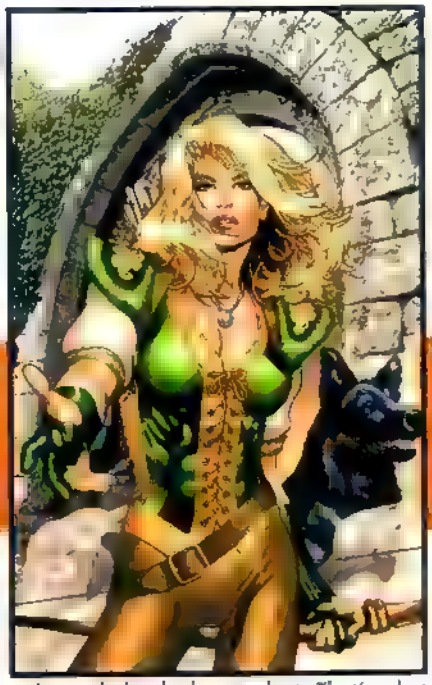
BRINGING YOU UP TO SPEED ON SIGIL...

[redacted]

LAND
GERACI
CÆSAR

by mike cotton

REBELLION!



[redacted]

Everyone needs a quest. .and CrossGen's got one just for you *Sojourn*, written by Ron Marz and penciled by Greg Land, isn't your average CrossGen book. In fact, it isn't even your average comic book, because as in all CrossGen books, one of the main characters wears the powerful Sigil, but this time it isn't the hero—it's the villain

"When Greg first came aboard, we all started talking about designing a new book," says Marz. "Me, Greg and [CrossGen founder] Mark Alessi all thought it would be really interesting to have the only Sigil Bearer in the book be the bad guy."

The bad guy is the sadistic Lord Mordath, killed in battle long ago but risen with the deadly powers of the Sigil To face this monster who's conquered the world land by land is our good guy—or in this case, good girl Arwyn is a young and beautiful archer on a quest to find the Five Fragments of an arrow that slew Mordath 300 years earlier!

"We really want this book to be epic," says Marz. "It won't be three issues and then she's found all five pieces. But at the same time, if she does find all five pieces, that doesn't mean the quest is over. There's going to be a lot of changes in her life and in her quest as she goes on."

Luckily, Arwyn won't have to go the tough road to take on Mordath alone Marz says she'll have a dynamic supporting cast ready to back her up when things get rough

"I don't want to say too much because I like the surprise, but early on, Arwyn ends up in Mordath's dungeon," says the writer "When she's there, she meets Gareth, who's also an archer He basically just tags along with her Oh, and of course there's her trusty dog, Kreeg. We'll pick up characters along the way of the quest, but those are the main guys."

While the crux of the book wil focus on Arwyn's search for the five pieces of the powerful arrow that can slay Mordath, Marz says there are also plans to focus on the people affected by Mordath's conquering them

"When an evil warlord conquers your world, there're always people to be helped," says the writer teasingly "She'll get sidetracked once in a while, but she'll always try to get back to finding the missing pieces But there's no way she'll ever let someone go unhelped who needs it. That's what heroes do "

But according to Marz, Arwyn's going to need some help of her own, too. The writer says that, much like the fugitive and the one-armed-man, there's always someone dogging the hero's heels

"Obviously, Mordath doesn't want her to get the five pieces together," says Marz. "She'll always have a bounty on her head, and in a world ruled by one man well, his power's pretty absolute She'll be lucky if she makes it through an entire issue."

Wizard Staff Writer Mike Cotton has a bounty on his feet, but for some reason nobody's come to collect

Arwyn's buds Gareth (left) and Kreeg (top right) help fight Mordeth's evil.

CROSS EXAMINATION

BRINGING YOU UP TO SPEED ON SOJOURN...

[redacted]

ADVANCE
LOOK!

by mike cotton

NEGATIVE SPACE

Negation's raging group of heroes just want to go home

Lost in space—sure, it's the name of a cheesy '60s sci-fi series, but it's also the theme behind CrossGen's new series, *Negation*.

Written by Mark Waid (*JLA*) and Tony Bedard and penciled by Paul Pelletier (*Titans*), the series takes a closer look at the Negation, a race of marauding interdimensional aliens who've been seen plaguing the characters in one of Waid's other CrossGen titles, *Crux*.

"We've kind of seen the Negation as big monsters in *Crux*," explains Waid. "Now we're going to see them as more than that.. there are big brawny monsters in the Negation, but that's only part of the big picture."

According to the writer, the Negation have secretly been kidnapping members of the First, Sigil-Bearers, some humans and some Atlanteans to place them all on a remote world and watch them interact to learn about them.

"The Negation has taken kind of a sampling of the different clans and castes of the CrossGen Universe," Waid says. "They're plunking everyone down on a very harsh world deep inside Negation space. They're doing it all to get a better idea of what their enemies are capable of and what they can withstand."

But *Negation* won't be focused solely on its namesake. Instead, it will focus on 19 lucky escapees who break free of the Negation's holding pen of a planet.

"The easiest way to describe it is it's *The Dirty Dozen* meets *The Great Escape*," Waid claims. "A group of them does escape, but it's at a horrible, horrible cost.

"Now the escapees are in a way, traveling from world to world in Negation space, finding out more and more about their enemy. Their whole plan is to find out how the Negation hierarchy works and then find someone inside it that they can force to show them the way home."

We drugged Staff Writer Mike Cotton and left him pantsless in Brooklyn to see what he could handle.

THE FUGITIVES

AN ADVANCE LOOK AT THE MAIN PLAYERS OF NEGATION

A.

B.

C.

D.

***Negation*'s escapees try to make it back home, staying one step ahead of their nemesis.**

ADVANCE
LOOK!

by mike cotton

SLEUTH OR DARE

CrossGen investigates Victorian era mystery fiction with *Ruse*

The world's greatest detective ain't who you think. Sherlock Holmes? Batman? The Hardy Boys? Not even close. The world's greatest detective's a guy you've never heard of—but you will if CrossGen has anything to say about it. *Ruse*, featuring a master detective on a planet very much like Victorian England, looks to be CrossGen's most different and talked-about book this fall.

Ruse, written by fan favorite Mark Waid and penciled by the very talented Butch Guice, debuts October 31. Following the cases of Simon Archard, *Ruse* is CrossGen's first attempt at detective fiction—and it's an attempt Waid's very excited about.

"What's great about CrossGen is you're always getting to try new things," says Waid. "This guy's the greatest detective of his world. But he's been his world's greatest detective for so long, he's kind of bored. His intellect is so honed, there's nothing that challenges him. Then comes a femme fatale, a criminal mastermind—he finally has something to fight for, he finally has someone who actually could beat him."

According to Waid, Archard's enemy isn't the only woman in his life. His assistant, Emma Bishop, is the detective's conscience—the one person who makes him remember that even if he solves a crime, he still has to worry about the people affected by it.

"He really has no human touch at all," Waid explains. "Emma is much more emotional. She's the one watching him chase the criminal while he leaves the victim hanging by a drain pipe. He's almost too focused, and she makes sure he sees the whole picture."

And while *Ruse* is a new venture into mystery fiction for CrossGen, there's also some familiar symbols in the book. Even though this is their one book without a Sigil-Bearer, if fans look closely enough around Archard's place at 47 Strand Boulevard, they'll see those always-present Sigils on his tie clip and trademark cane.

"There will be mysteries in every story," says Waid. "But one of the real mysteries is, who is this guy? And why does he have those symbols?"

Staff Writer Mike Cotton once detected a strange smell in his apartment. He later recognized the smell.

PERIOD PIECES

AN ADVANCE LOOK AT THE MAIN PLAYERS OF RUSE

A:

B:

C:

This "Victorian England" isn't what it appears—those gargoyles are alive!

ADVANCE LOOK!

CRISIS OF FAITH
The barrier Hawk gives a hand to the gods who killed his brother.

by mike cotton

ENTER THE SAMURAI

Can a lowly monk avenge his brother's death by challenging the gods? In February's The Path, revenge has never been so difficult.

If you're looking for trouble, Cross Gen's got *The Path*. A new direction for the publisher, *The Path* follows the exploits of a disenfranchised monk searching for redemption, revenge, enlightenment and a way to take on the most powerful people in his universe—the First. Written by Ron Marz, with art by a still-unnamed artist, *The Path* will launch in February.

"This is really a samurai epic," says Marz. "It's something akin to *Lone Wolf and Cub* or any Kurosawa film. But it's also about a generation wondering where traditional values end and individual values begin."

The story of *The Path* spins out of the first issues of *The First*, where readers saw the monk receive his warrior brother's Sigil of power when his brother died. According to Marz, the monk has a very different plan for his Sigil than anyone else.

"He's sworn vengeance on the gods, because they were responsible for his brother's death," says Marz. "Basically, he wants to destroy the First."

But the gods aren't the monk's only problem. He's also realized the emperor of his land may be a mad man, leading the country to certain doom. But with his entire value system crumbling around him, the monk won't be traveling his tough road alone.

"There will be the traditional warrior maiden," says Marz. "And there's this Viking who's kind of an outsider. They'll both be accompanying him for what's going to be a pretty intense journey."

Staff Writer Mike Cotton would swear vengeance on the gods. Unfortunately, his momma doesn't let him swear.

THE CHOSEN ONES

AN ADVANCE LOOK AT THE MAIN PLAYERS OF THE PATH

A:

B:

C:

D:

MERIDIAN
COMING SOON TO
A THEATER NEAR YOU

HERE'S THE PITCH...

[redacted]

CrossGen's ripe for the picking...as far as licensing goes, that is.

Mark Alessi's comic company has grown by leaps and bounds in the year since its initial titles debuted, expanding both in terms of popularity and the number of series produced (what was five books is now eight, soon to be 11), yet—amazingly—the rights to all of CrossGen's properties remain in-house.

In a time when companies get production rolling on licensed lunchboxes, action figures and tee-shirts before the first issue of the comic that inspired them even hits the stands, Alessi & Company are playing things much closer to the vest, dissecting each and every offer in an effort to ensure the integrity of their franchises.

"We're not going to license things to people exclusively without some assurance they'll be produced," CrossGen Vice President of Product Development Tony Panaccio says, addressing the all-too-familiar comic trend of selling off the rights to projects that never see the light of day. "We don't want to talk about options. We're talking about greenlit projects or we're not talking at all."

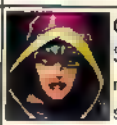
And while CrossGen hasn't yet inked any major deals, there's no doubt the company has the potential to be a big-time player in the mass market arenas of video games, toys, television and movies.

If we were in Alessi's shoes, here's what we'd do...

ANIMATED MOTION PICTURE: MERIDIAN

[redacted]

SYNDICATED TELEVISION SHOWS: MYSTIC & SCION

	HERCULES	SCION	XENA	MYSTIC
HERO	**Hercules:** Son of the king of the Olympian gods, he journeys to right wrongs.	**Ethan:** Son of the Heron Dynasty he travels around Avalon seeking peace and justice.	**Xena:** Earth's foremost fighter, she is the world's warrior princess	**Giselle:** Ciress' foremost mystic, she's her world's version of "magic royalty"
COMPANION	**Iolaus:** Hercules' best friend fights alongside him in battle	**Skink:** Ethan's best friend keeps him ready for battle	**Gabrielle:** Xena's faithful sidekick provides sage advice	**Skitter:** Giselle's faithful sidekick offers advice—and sarcasm
RECURRING SIDEKICK	**Autolycus:** The prince of thieves shows up every now and then in Herc's life	**Kai:** The prince of the Heron Dynasty pops up every so often in *Scion*	**Joxer:** He lends his somewhat limited abilities to Xena in combat	 **Genevieve:** She uses her not-so-limited skills to aid Giselle in any way possible
PRIMARY VILLAIN	**Ares:** The god of war is an undying, persistent thorn in Hercules' side.	**Bron:** The ruler of the Raven Dynasty is Ethan's sworn enemy.	**Callisto:** She adopts Xena's name as part of an evil scheme.	**Darrow:** He entangles Giselle's magic in his villainous plans
SUPER-POWERFUL FEMALE VILLAIN	**Hera:** The queen of the Olympians uses her godly abilities to try and kill her stepson.	**Mai Shen:** The god like member of the First grants Bron the powers he'll need to destroy Ethan	**Hope:** One of Xena's worst enemies, she had the power to destroy the world	**Animora:** One of Giselle's worst enemies, she aspired to rule the world
LOVE INTEREST	**Serena:** Her ties to the Golden Hind make romance with Herc difficult.	**Ashleigh:** Her ties to the Raven Dynasty make a relationship with Ethan almost impossible.	**Ares:** Xena doesn't quite recognize her love for the god of war.	**Thierry:** Giselle doesn't see the artist for the catch he is

VIDEO GAMES: SIGIL

Step aside, Duke Nukem—Samandahl Rey's coming to the PlayStation 2

Okay, so maybe CrossGen hasn't made the jump to video games just yet, but when it finally happens, *Sigil* (and Samandahl Rey) should go to the head of the class.

Sigil would be the perfect choice for a new FPS (that's First Person Shooter) game, crossing the combat elements of *Doom* with the reptilian targets of *Turok*.

Fans could play the game as Sam or Zanni (with a

ACTION FIGURES: THE FIRST

The Masters of the Universe muscled their way to the top of the toy market in the '80s, using bulging biceps, a fantasy setting and the never-ending battle of good versus evil to enthrall the imaginations of impressionable boys around the globe. *The First* has all that—and the ability to kick it up a notch.

With an incredibly diverse cast that includes strong men and even stronger women, a line of expertly sculpted toys based on Bart Sears' designs would fly off the shelves.

Imagine it—children playing with their incredibly detailed First figures, acting out the struggle between selfless House Dexter and selfish House Sinister on an ultra-cool Elysia playset.

The sole problem? Deciding which of *The First*'s exhaustive cast to transform into toys first. Here's who we'd suggest:

ALTWAAL The mightiest of the First, he'd definitely clinch a spot in Wave 1, packaged with removable armor and a glowing staff weapon.

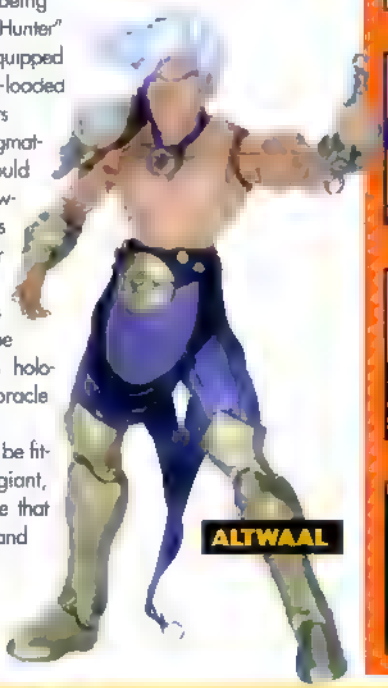
INGRA The leader of House Sinister would have interchangeable armor and battery-powered glowing red eyes.

TRENIN The being known as "The Hunter" would come equipped with a spring-loaded bow and arrows.

ENSON This enigmatic giant would come with glowing orange eyes and a smaller Wyture figure.

ORIUM Sinister's seer would be packaged with holographic oracle sphere.

GANNISH He'd be fitted with a giant, opposable cape that doubles as a stand.



LIVE ACTION MOVIE: CRUX

hidden code allowing them to run around as JeMerik Meer, Ethan, Sephie or Giselle), hopping from planet to planet in the *BitterLuck*, guided by the disembodied voice of Roiya Sintor.

The game's animated opening sequence would set up the storyline, showing Sam receiving his Sigil—a weapon he'd learn more about as he moves through the levels, battling Loser, the Weaponsmaster, Sultan Ronolo and hordes upon hordes of Saurians.

And who knows? Maybe *Sigil* scribe Mark Waid could write it.

A WEEK IN THE LIFE

Comics, cowls, kings and Satan–just a regular week at CrossGen

MONDAY, 7:3[illegible]a.m., 7:3[illegible].m., 7:4[illegible]a.m., 7:50 a.m.
Stupid alarm clock.

MONDAY, 7:51 a.m.
Realize why people prefer showers over baths in the mornings: less chance of drowning. Water revivifying. Pronouns returning.

MONDAY, 8:35 a.m.
...and another week begins as I roll into the CrossGeneration offices and plop down behind my desk, checking e-mail and awaiting the inevitable first "Mark Waid, you have a call on line one" intercom page.

Even at the six-month mark, it still takes some mental adjustment to acclimate to a way of life different from the one I've lived these last 10 years or so as a freelancer, whose idea of work clothes was a Superman bathrobe. Here at CrossGen, I'm not just a (generally fully dressed) writer; I'm a manager/problem-solver/cheerleader/idea man, as well. Like my cohorts, Barbara Kesel, Ron Marz and Tony Bedard, I'm responsible for a handful of titles—in my case, *Sigil*, *Crux*, *Ruse* and (with Tony) *Negation*.

Not only do I make sure that the penciler always has a plot from which to draw, but I'm also expected to oversee every aspect of each issue's production from start to finish. That includes...well, I'll let the week speak for itself.

MONDAY, 9:15 a.m.
I check in with the boys in the *Crux* quad (easy, since the center bullpen's designed to keep each art team together). Penciler Steve Epting and I talk a little about the next plot due, one that deals with the history of ancient Atlantis, and he suggests (wisely) that a mighty ruler might have created the Atlantean civilization out of warring factions, thus presaging the myth of King Arthur. I counter with my contribution to this idea: "Great." Unlike me, Steve's a fairly quiet man. He channels his enthusiasm for the job directly into his work, meaning that if Steve *wants* to draw an Atlantean king, I know sight unseen that it'll radiate energy and excitement.

Preston Nash

HUNGER PAINS Mark Waid didn't know where the morning donuts went, but he was pretty sure Ian Feller (left) was responsible. Left to right: Barbara Kesel, Gina Villa and Ron Marz get to live.

TUESDAY, 11:10 p.m.
Sigil penciler Scot Eaton has been hectoring me for weeks, since I sheepishly admitted to owning a picture of me wearing Adam West's Batman cowl. Because Scot presents himself as a sweet, shy man, I know it's safe to leave the photo with him while I run a fast errand. I can trust him to keep it to himself.

I return 23 minutes later to find about a hundred gigantic color copies taped to every smooth surface in the building. Instantly, everything takes on a new clarity. Of course, Satan would come to Earth pretending to be sweet and shy. There's no better disguise. How did I miss the clues? Why, over "Scot's" desk hangs the official *Sigil* quad motto: "When you're hatin', there's no creatin'." Sweet. As Hell.

I open up the next *Sigil* plot in progress and add a page calling for 14 panels.

TUESDAY, 11:45 a.m.
It's the weekly Writers' Lunch with Mark Alessi and Gina Villa. Again, one of the best parts of working at CrossGen is the community feel and the free exchange of ideas. Today, for example, I've written myself into a corner where *Sigil*'s lead, Sam, meets another Sigil-Bearer—but I have no idea what he or she should be. Alessi suggests a Celtic warrior, and the idea exchange begins in earnest, largely because what I know about Celtic warriors you could fit into Britney Spears' navel. I let the others hash out our new hero's powers and playground while I finish my penne Bolognese.

WEDNESDAY, 12:00 p.m.
When I first came to CrossGen, I was afraid I'd have to surrender my weekly routine of scurrying to the first available open comics shop on New Book Day. I was deluded. Make no mistake: The artists on the floor put in weeks of 60 hours plus. I have honestly never seen a harder-working bunch of guys. But when inker Andy Smith starts jingling his car keys, I swear to God you'd think someone had

sounded the shift-change whistle at Fred Flintstone's quarry. We all still love comics. An hour from now, half the staff will have swarmed like locusts through the local shop, leaving behind only two copies of TOYFARE and an issue of *X-Men: The Hidden Years*.

WEDNESDAY, 2:15 p.m.

Cover Meeting day. Once a month, Barbara, Ron, Art Director Brandon Peterson and I sit down with Mark and Gina to knock around cover concepts across the line, bringing the pencilers in one by one and encouraging them to participate in the discussion as the focus falls on their books. Since Steve Epting and I had already discussed that ancient Atlantean king, the guy's a natural for the next *Crux* cover, and Steve's barely in the meeting before the idea's approved and he's back at his drawing table. *Sigil*'s a little tougher, as I didn't tell Scot he'd be designing a Celtic warrior, for no good reason other than it's just too much fun to watch the big cartoon sweat come flying off of Scot's brow when he's ambushed. Score: Satan 100, Waid 2.

THURSDAY, 11:25 a.m.

I give up on dialoguing black-and-white photocopies of *Crux* pages and just go steal all the color proofs from Frank D'Armata's desk. It's the only way I can keep those damn twins straight. I stop by *Sigil* colorist Wil Quintana on the way and ask for what I think will be a complicated color effect on a certain page. Wil accomplishes it with two keystrokes.

THURSDAY, 3:40 p.m.

"All proofers to the conference room!" Barbara, Ian Feller, Gina and I assemble to pass around pages from an issue of *Meridian* that's due at the printers tomorrow.

Each page is carefully scrutinized to ferret out any grotesque misspellings, transdimensional grammar or, frankly, any dialogue that was obviously written in too big a hurry. Because our in-house color printers are calibrated to the standards of Quebecor, the company that physically prints our books, we're looking at pages exactly as they'll be on the stands—and we can make changes right up until the FedEx guy gets tired of hitting on our receptionist.

BUCK WAID: Mark Waid didn't know why *Crux* artist Steve Epting liked to draw nude pictures of the writer, but he did know he liked the way they looked.

THURSDAY, 5:50 p.m.

Make no mistake: There's no lunch lady in the CrossGen cafeteria. After hours there is, however, a man pouring whiskey into glasses, and I have no problem with that trade. That man is John Smith, the CrossGen facility manager and go-to guy. John wears a goatee, which is good, since it's sometimes the only way that I can tell him apart from the refrigerator if they're too close together.

FRIDAY, 10:10 a.m.

Artist Paul Pelletier and colorist Morry Hollowell are putting the finishing touches on a piece of *Negation* promotional art for our convention booth. Because we're all able to stand at Morry's monitor and kibbitz amongst ourselves, the problem gets resolved quickly.

FRIDAY, 6:14 p.m.

And somewhere in all this, I actually manage to write a few pages.

I e-mail them to my home computer so I can futz with them a little over the weekend, then slink out knowing that it all begins anew on Monday...which gives the "present" I've left in Scot's desk time to ripen. I exit the parking lot smiling.

CrossGen Comics' Senior Writer Mark Waid's battle against Satan can be found in the comic book Dork in a Batman Cowl.

DON'T DRINK THE KOOL-AID: No one knew what Mark Waid's ultimate goal at CrossGen was, but they were all pretty sure it ended with Janet Reno and the FBI, outside with a search warrant and tear gas.

BY THE NUMBERS

WANT TO KNOW WHAT IT TAKES TO KEEP CROSSGEN RUNNING?

- **2** Artwork containing CrossGen characters hanging on the walls
- **3** Original WIZARD covers hanging on the walls
- **3** Pieces of art in men's room containing nudity
- **5.5** Miles of data cable located in studio
- **6** Employees who stay in to eat on a daily basis
- **9** Art tables that were custom-built by John Smith from scratch
- **15** Cases of 11" x 17" copier paper ordered per month
- **48** Cases of Snapple ordered per month
- **55** Employees who stay in to eat John Smith's barbecue on the third Thursday of each month
- **75** Number of cases of soda ordered per month
- **102** Number of statues and action figures on Frank D'Armata's desk
- **423** DVDs in Brandon Peterson's office
- **12,991** Size of studio in square feet

by chris lawrence

GHOST STORIES

CrossGen doesn't need to publish a horror story–a tale of the undead lives among them

It emerges at night, abandoning its netherworld lair to stalk the shadows in the back corners of CrossGen's Tampa studio.

Creeping about the building, it leaves a cold uneasiness in its wake. Disturbing noises echo throughout the comic company's halls once the sun goes down, and the remnants of mischievous pranks litter the floor as it wisps in and out of sight.

"It" is the Ghost of CrossGen, and several members of the comic company's staff swear on their grave that it exists...

Photo illustration: Caesar Rodriguez

DEAD LINES? Is there a poltergeist or are the CrossGen staffers seeing things?

Colorist Caesar Rodriguez's first run-in with the specter came at 11:30 on a Friday night. He'd been working late, toiling after hours with *Scion* colleague Jimmy Cheung.

Leaning back in his chair, Rodriguez saw someone glide past his cubicle, catching only a **glimpse of the form** as it walked by briskly.

Judging by its height and build, Rodriguez assumed it was artist Bart Sears, coming in to check on something. The colorist turned to Cheung and said, "Bart's here."

"No," the penciler replied, looking up from his table. "He isn't."

Intrigued, he and Cheung quickly swept through the building, a search which assured the duo of one thing—**they were alone**.

"I think I saw a ghost," Rodriguez stated, a suggestion that drew a laugh from Cheung. Rodriguez showed the penciler his arm—it was covered with goosebumps: "I'm not lying."

Letterer Dave Lanphear's only glimpse of the supernatural took place in the CrossGen kitchen. The letterer was working late one night, preparing dinner in the kitchen, and was expecting his wife to join him. Out of the corner of his eye, Lanphear saw someone enter the room, and turned to say something.

"There was nobody there," he remembers. "I know I saw somebody—**it wasn't just my imagination**."

The ghost primarily haunts the back corner of the CrossGen studio, which is where its presence is felt most often. Lanphear's office is right there.

"Two people have seen something in that same exact corner," he said. "We don't know what the deal is, but the air-conditioning is never right on this side of the building. **It's perpetually colder**."

The letterer may not have ever seen the spirit in that area of the building, but he knows all too well that it's there.

"If I've got my office door closed, there are times I'll hear somebody come up and jiggle the door handle," he says. "**It's still happening**, during the night, at weird hours. I've heard someone jiggle the handle, but there's never anybody there."

Justin Ponsor doesn't know if he believes in ghosts, but he finds the occurrences at CrossGen "really creepy." While wrapping up *Scion* #11, he and Cheung pulled an all-nighter, alone in the office. The two were chatting a bit, when a noise brought their conversation to a dead stop. They heard the unmistakable sound of **a door opening**.

"The noise came over from Dave Lanphear's office, and we went over to check it out," Ponsor tells. "Nothing seemed too strange, but Dave's door was ajar...and locked."

The next day, curious as to why someone would lock their door and leave it open, Ponsor asked Lanphear if that's something he regularly did.

"No," the letterer said. "I close it, but I can't lock it. **I don't have the key**."

Though the specter's influence has continued to be felt throughout the offices, Rodriguez hasn't had any visual sightings of the apparition since that original night—a fact for which he's quite thankful.

"I try not to be here **by myself at night**," he says. "That's for sure."

Michael Atiyeh
Derec Aucoin
Jason Baumgartner
Jim Cheung
Andrew Crossley
Frank D'Armata
John Dell
Laura DePuy
Andrea Di Vito
Scot Eaton
Randy Elliott
Jordi Ensign
Steve Epting
Fabrizio Fiorentino
Drew Geraci
Jackson Guice
Andrew Hennessy
Don Hillsman II
Morry Hollowell
Adam Hughes
Rob Hunter
Richard Isanove
Dennis Jensen
Barbara Kesel
Karl Kesel
Jason Lambert
Greg Land
Rick Leonardi
Joseph Linsner
Mark Lipka
Rick Magyar
Ron Marz
Steve McNiven
Christopher Moeller
Paul Mounts
Paul Pelletier
George Pérez
Mike Perkins
Brandon Peterson
Justin Ponsor
Wil Quintana
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